SPIRITUAL HERITAGE OF RAJASTHAN

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PREFACE

The Land of Rajasthan is known for its chivalry and heroism The glory of medieval Rajasthan is linked with the examples of utmost sacrifice and display of personal valour in the internecine wars a popular theme with the Dingal poets It is worth mentioning a fact that even a western rational mind like Col James Tod was highly fascinated by this theme in so far as he could afford to ignore some of the best aspects of the colourful history and culture of Rajasthan

It is still more surprising that even after Col James Tod almost no serious and comprehensive attempt was made by the scholars and historians to highlight the best and the finest aspect of Rajasthan s culture—the spiritual heritage The author of this monograph could humbly claim to have taken an initiative in this regard by opening a new field for the researchers

The book deals with the Saint poets and folk deities of Rajasthan and their social and cultural contribution They advocated the idea of essential unity of mankind classless and casteless society besides criticizing the man made distinctions with regard to various faith Their contribution to the environment and ecology of the contemporary society is of singular importance In brief their ideas and philosophy is still valid and relevant today no less then it was in the past

रुचीना वचित्र्या दृजु कुटिल नानापथ जुषाम् ।
नृणामेको गम्यस्त्वमसि पयसामर्णव इव ॥

[Owing to their diversity in taste people prefer different way, straight or crooked but Thou art the only goal for man just as the sea is the goal of all waters]

—Dinesh Chandra Shukla

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THE TRADITION OF FOLK-GOD

The medieval Bhakti movement or devotional transformation was a phenomenon of great importance in the history of religious and *spiritual life of India in general and Rajasthan in particular* As an organised movement with versatile leadership and challeng ing ideas *it reached its zenith between the fifteenth* and seventeenth centuries The leadership of this movement was undoubtedly provided by poet saints They used vernacular languages or dialects and were committed to the transformation of common people They translated the religious rituals and practices into spiritual and social values emotional texture and philosophical deduction The movement emphasised religious and cultural *integration* liberal outlook in human behaviour individualism self realisation and humanism It was opposed to all types of ostentatious rituals ceremonies and authoritarian behaviour The *Sants* or Saints derived their ideas from diverse sources including traditions and interpreted the ideals of human *life in their own* novel ways The tradition of Saints or *Sant Parampara* is essentially non sectarian though a number of saints are regarded as founders of sects named after them This tradition excells in the realisation of communal amity and harmony and emotional integration It *may be pointed out that* socially a majority of them belonged to the lower strata of both Hindu and Muslim communities Seldom they received *formal education* and often they were even illiterate Financially they belonged to the underprivileged class and were often very poor Quite a few *were women* *A majority* of them had no access to traditional knowledge and were not well versed in Sanskrit Hence, they used vernaculars especially Hindi *in* northern India Originating among common folk they addressed themselves to the task of the emancipation and well being of common folk The greatest contribution of the saints was simplifi

cation of the complex social organisation and complicated religious traditions In this respect they were against any form of orthodoxy and conservatism Their aim was to realise the eternal Bliss and realise their ownself In doing so they devised a methodology which was very simple and could be adopted and accepted by all without a multitude of religious exercise

The *Nirguna Sant Parampara* denies the value of religious rites idol worship caste creed and sex discriminations pilgrimages holy baths occult performances and practices and showism in the worship of God The followers of *Nirguna Bhakti* were seekers of the Absolute the ultimate reality The northern saints mostly preached m*rging or reabsorption of the finite soul into the infinite, ineffable reality which is the ultimate goal of human life This is similar to the monistic philosophy of Vedanta They conceived the Supreme Being as formless and devoid of qualities The saints stress the necessity of devotion to and practice of the Divine name Reverence and devotion to the Divine *Guru* is also emphasised They placed great importance on the company of Sants i e *Satsang* Thus *Naam Satguru* and *Satsang* may be regarded as the great trinity of *Sant Sadhana* According to traditional view saints are supposed to be edepts of the *Nirguna* aspect and the Vaishanavas edepts of the *Saguna* aspect of Bhakti or devotion The gate of salvation according to saints is open to all creatures The saints ideal of sanctity could be achieved by all and transcends all the social and religious barriers They pay absolute respect to life advocate self restrain humility reverence for all compassion non violence and service to humanity

The saint tradition and folk god tradition of Rajasthan is rich in all respects It became popular with the evolution of Bhakti movement similar to that in the rest of northern India and left to posterity a memorable treasure They left the great culture of love and meditation service and salvation and have shown the path leading to self-realisation and attainment of eternal Bliss

FOLK-GODS

The advent of Bhakti movement in the early medieval centuries in Rajasthan is dominated by reverence to popular heroes later designated as folk gods They, essentially represent the

faculty of hero worship by the common people of this region Quite a few of them belonged to the royalty and the feudal structure of the socio political organisation of the region Miracles and possession of supernatural powers fascinated the people associated with them With the passage of time stories got interwoven with the already popular fabric of the belief of super natural character of these heroes Adoration of these heroes through singing of musico poetic compositions and praising of deeds hyperbolically became a routine matter in the life of laity of this region To a modern mind their contributions to ecological conservation and environmental protection are some of the greatest eternal wealth bequeathed by these folk heroes and dieties Let us imagine for a moment the symbol of Tejaji installed under a *Khejari* tree Only devil would dare to fell this tree which is under constant protection of this hero god who inhabits the spot in the form of a venomous snake We feel that this is a more effective technique for the preservation of trees and vegetation than Padmashri Sunder Lal Bahuguna s Chipko Andolan Many of these heroes sacrificed their lives for the protection of the sacred animal cow and thus emphasised supreme kindness towards animals

Another striking example is Ramdevji who is a symbol of communal harmony On one hand the Hindus venerate him as the incarnation of Lord Krishna and on the other, the Muslims revere him as Ramsa Peer Though originally belonging to the royalty and the privileged class these fork gods ascribed to them selves the task of upliftment of masses and often even laid down their lives while protecting the rights and prerogatives of common people

GOGAJI

Gogaji the first to be counted among the five folk gods was son of Jevara Chauhan and Bachhal Jevara was a feudatory of Dadrewa (in Churu District) It is believed that he was contem porary of the famous Siddha Gorakhnath who flourished in the tenth century A D By the beginning of fifteenth circa Gogaji was already being worshipped as a folk god and was supposed to be similar to the traditional Hindu gods like Brahma Vishnu and Mahesh According to folk tradition and historical writings, like Khyata of Dayaldas Gogaji rescued cows from invaders who

supported Gogaji s cousins Arjan and Sarjan as part of a conspiracy Gogaji met with a glorious death and his wife Menal performed Sati He thus became immortal for the cause of protection of the cows His icon depicts him riding on a horse with a spear in hand He is also worshipped symbolically as a serpent diety In manuscripts also he is by and large depicted as serpent People worship his idol which is normally placed under a Khejari tree It is believed that one can get rid from the poison of snake only by taking refuge in Gogaji He is also known as *Jahir Peer* To commemorate his deeds Goga Navami is celebrated with great fervour on the ninth of dark half Bhadrapad at Gogamedi in SriGanganagar district It is important to point out that on this day both Hindu and Muslim devotees pay their homage to Nagaraj and Goga Peer respectively His worship brings hope and welfare Cultural programs like folk dance and music is organised at the Than of Gogaji especially in the Shekha wati area to please him

The farmers of Rajasthan invariably start ploughing the fields by applying Goga Rakhrhi Thus Gogaji occupies foremost place in the minds of people who worship him as God incarnate

TEJAJI

Tejaji is another hero who laid down his life in the service of the cows He commands veneration of the people of Rajasthan especially Jats Tejaji was born on Magha Shukla Chaturdashi of the year 1074 A D at the household of Taharhji and Ramkunwari He became fatally injured while liberating the cows of Lachha Gujari who had sought his help and valour The cows were being taken away by Mers Later on he died of snake bite at Surasara (Kishangarh) His wife Pemal performed Sati along with his mortal remains A gigantic fair is organised at Parbatsar (Nagaur) to commemorate the day on which his soul set forth on its heavenly abode namely Bhadrapad Shukla Dashmi His story is recounted *Byavalas* are recited and Khyalas pertaining to his life are performed in the fair His followers wear silver amulets bearing him as a warrior on horseback with sword drawn while a serpent is shown biting his tongue Tejaji is also revered as God of serpents It is said that to cure snake bite Tejaji s cord should be tied around the right foot of the patient A lot of folk literature has been accredited to the glory of Tejaji His popularity is

evident from the large number of temples dedicated to him dotting the landscape of Rajasthan Teja *Ter* is sung invariably throughout Marudhara before the commencement of sowing of crops

PABUJI

The popular annual fair at Kolu (Phalaudi) is dedicated to the memory of a valiant hero, Pabuji who is considered to be an *incarnation of Lakshmanji* He is represented in the form of a spear wielding horse mounted warrior He was born in the Rathore clan in 1239 A D His father was Dhandhalji His fearless nature became evident in the childhood itself when he granted asylum to the seven Thori brothers from as mighty a king as Ana Baghela He died fighting for the protection of cows His wife the daughter of Suraj Mal Sodha of Amarkot committed Sati Pabuji s high ideals include honouring the womenfolk protection of pastoral wealth and service of the weak and desolate He was also a reformist and opposed untouchability by spirit and action He has been hailed as the god of camels On the outbreak of diseases in camels Pabuji s help is sought and on the eradication of the disease Pabuji s Pharh is sung by Bhopas and Thoris *Pavade* have also been written in his praise Pabuji is supposed to provide security to his followers in exile His followers are believed to have premonitions regarding future events

DEVJI

Devji was the son of Baghrawat chieftain Bhoja s Gujar wife Sethu He was born in the year 1243 when his father had already perished along with his twenty three brothers in an aggression with the ruler of Bhinaya In order to protect Devji his mother took him to her parental home in Malwa Later on he avenged his father s death by killing the ruler of Bhinaya Devji is accredited with the performance of many miracles in Mewar His devotees are mainly Gujars who celebrate his birthday with Khir and Choorma on Magha Shukla Shashthi They sing Devji ki Pharh Baghrawat 'Devji ki Baat and Khyat in his praise Ample literature concerning him is available Bravery and chivalry are considered to be synonyms of Devji Devji renounced the material world on Bhadrapad Shukla Saptami at Dehmali On this day a large fair assembles at the spot

MALLINATHJI

Mallinathji was the eldest son of Janide and Rawal Salakha of Marwar He was born in 1358 A D After his father s death he helped his uncle Kanharde in the administration of Mahewa In 1374 he became the ruler of Mahewa with the help of the Khan of Jalore dethroning his uncle Tribhuvansi His fame as an able warrior spread far and wide when he thoroughly defeated the army of Nizamuddin the subedar of Firoz Tughlaq in Malwa He helped his nephew Chunda to win Mandore and Nagaur He also gave Siwana Khed and Osian as Jagirs to his relatives In 1398 A D he became a disciple of Ugamsi Bhati on the advice of his wife Roopande It is believed that he became a *Siddha* and had visions of events of future He was monotheist and believed in Nirguna Nirakar God He emphasised on continually reciting the name of God He gave importance to *Satsang* and in 1399 A D organised a congregation of all saints of Rajasthan for Hari Kirtan Barmer is known as Malani after his name He died at Tilwara (Barmer) on the banks of river Looni on Chaitra Shukla Dvitiya A large animal fair is held here every year around the temple constructed in his memory

RAMDEVJI

Ramdevji belonged to the Tanwar family of Rajputs and was born in 1332 A D at the household of Ajmalji and Mainade His valour became evident at an early age when he vanquished cruel Bhairav and put an end to the atrocities he had committed on the inhabitants of Pokaran He had received Pokaran from Mallinathji and later gifted it in dowry to his nephew in law His wife was Netalde daughter of Dalji Sodha of Amarkot He helped in the coming up of village Runecha which is now famous as Ramdevra The largest fair of the state is held at Ramdevra in the month of Bhadrapad Ramdevji took Samadhi at Ramdevra on Bhadrapad Shukla Ekadashi in 1458 A D He is revered on one hand by Hindus as an incarnation of Lord Krishna and on the other by Muslims as Ramsa Peer He opposed castism and welcomed the people of lower castes to his cult Even now a majority of his devotees belong to this category His praises are sung by Kamars The priests at Ramdevra are Tanwar Rajputs He opposed idol worship and the concept of Tirtha yatra However his devotees wear amulets depicting him as a horse mounted warrior The

temples dedicated to him are called Than and usually have his Pagaliya (footsteps) marks He emphasised the doctrine of *Karmavada* He accorded the place of highest esteem to Guru and *Satsang* People venerate him as a benevolent god who fulfills the wishes of his devotees His devotees are abundant in Gujarat also

HARBHUJI

Harbhuji was the son of king Sankhala of Bhudela (Nagaur) He started living in Phalaudi after his father s death where inspired by Ramdevji he shunned weapons and was baptised by Guru Balinathji He is considered to be forecaster and 'Vachan-siddha godman He used to help his devotees not only with directions and teachings but also by taking up arms on his side He had blessed Rao Jodhaji with a Katar at the onset of his *endeavour to liberate Mandore from the clutches of Mewar On being successful* the king gifted village Bengati (Phalaudi) to Harbhuji Bengati boasts of owning the major Than of Harbhuji Its priests are Sankhala Rajputs People worship Harbhuji Ki Gaddi on the fulfilment of their aspirations Like Ramdevji, Harbhuji was also an ardent reformist His fame is testified by the fact that after him Phalaudi came to be known as Harbhajmal

MEHAJI

Mehaji is included in Panch Peer of Rajasthan and is revered widely However no written or oral information worth mentioning here is available about his life personality and teachings There is a need for further research on this aspect of folk culture of Rajasthan

ISARDAS

In the Western Rajasthan and Northern Gujarat Isardas is accorded a place at par with that of Tulasi and Surdas in U P He was born to Amarbai wife of Sujaji in the family of Rohishra Charans in the Bhadres village of Barmer on Chaitra Shukla Navami of 1538 A D His devotional inclination became obvious from early childhood He became an orphan at an early age but the duty of his guardianship was lovingly and faithfully discharged by his uncle Asaji who made excellent arrangements for his education and social development He was married to Deval Bai at fourteen but she left him for heavenly abode in 1559 A D Later he was invited to the court of Rawaljam of Jamnagar who

was highly impressed by his poetic aptitude and Hari Bhakti He was honoured with gifts of villages His remarriage with Rajbai took place here Then he developed a slight inclination towards wordly pleasures Pandit Pitambar Bhatt revived his original religions turn of mind by a sermon At once he took Diksha under Bhattji and commenced the writing of devotional poetry Later on he was endowed with spiritual powers and performed numerous mircales *He was accorded the epithet Isara Parmesara* and hailed as being equivalent to God His major literary works are Hariras and Deviyana While Deviyana is meant for daily prayer routine Hariras is read out to the dead in a manner akin to the deliverance of Shrimad Bhagvadgita After a period of nearly forty years he returned to Bhadres where he attained emancipation in 1618 A D

THE TRADITION OF SAINTS

The Bhakti movement flourished in Rajasthan concurrently with its spread in the rest of northern India It is a well known fact that the establishment of the tradition of Bhakti in northern India is credited to Ramanand Prior to his endeavours, this movement was more or less limited to the southern plateau the pioneers being Shankaracharya, Nimbark, Madhvacharya, Rama nuja and a long lineage of other Dravida saints Ramananda, a Brahman of Prayag was a disciple of Raghavanand the patron of *Shree Sampradaya* He was a well read person having carried out deep probes into the realm of Dharma traditions, theology cults and rituals He consequently shunned all prejudices and developed *Abheda Drishti* He laid the foundation of *Ram Bhakti* on firm grounds in northern India His Bhakti was unique as although he embraced the *Nirguna* for all academic matters yet simultaneously he offered oblations to Lord Rama for all practical purposes He firmly believed and propounded that the *Kalyan* (well being) of the society lay in the contemplation of and 'strict adherence to the ideals of the *Maryada Purushottam* Being a firm believer of the idea of synthesis his alumnus included people from diverse religious orders castes and creeds The early torchbearers of the Bhakti in Rajasthan primarily belonged to his school Later on the movement stratified into several lines of development viz reformists Saguna margis and Nirguna margis

THE TRADITION OF RAMANAND

The tradition of Ramanand is characterised with use of local dialects non discrimination among classes castes sex and the like unorthodoxy in religious thought opposition of customary futile rituals denouncing of untouchability and social evils and strict adherence to purity in life The oblates belonging to this cult aim at the acquiring of *Advaita Drishti* and keep themselves pre-

occupied only with the treading of the path of knowledge to obtain *Atma Jynana* (self realization) and *Atma Santosh* (self satisfaction) The order of Ramanand later evolved along two major lines—the *nirguna* and the *saguna* So was it in Rajasthan

NIRGUNA CULT

Dhannaji and Pipaji are considered to be the leading lights of the State of this form of devotion

DHANNAJI—Dhannaji a Jat was born in 1415 A D at Dhuvan village of Tonk district He was inclined towards godliness from an early age He went to Kashi and became the disciple of Ramanand The Guru ordered him to practice devotion while staying in the *Grihastha Ashram* Consequently, he carried on his paternal occupation of agriculture while continuing the efforts for self realization He was a firm believer and strictly maintained that God is the sole doer of all things and actions His God was omnipresent omniscient, beyond the grasp of senses and indescribable He could be attained only by simplicity and purity after lighting the *Antarjyoti* He preached against ostentationus rituals idol worship and pilgrimage He accorded the highest esteem at par with God to Guru and considered him as the guide to attainment of *Param Pad* By virtue of *Nishkama Karmyoga* he was able to reach the apex of Bhakti while discharging his duties as a householder A large number of miracles are ascribed to him for example reaping a good harvest without sowing seeds creating ample milk and chapatis to feed Sadhus even though the initial quantity was much smaller and so on Dhanna stressed that the service to man is the sole aim of the Sants

PIPAJI—Pipaji was Khichi Rajput ruler of Gagaraun in Kota district He was born in the year 1425 He was non attached to the worldly affairs since childhood and this tendency kept on increasing even after his coronation Like Dhannaji he too associated himself with Ramanand and was similarly turned back to continue Bhakti while performing his duties as a householder But ultimately he could obtain the permission to lead the life of an ascetic along with his youngest queen Sita He started living in a cave at the confluence of Ahu and Kali Sindh rivers A temple dedicated to him was built after his death at the same spot

Several thaumaturgical events are associated with him Once he jumped into the sea for obtaining the vision of God and

returned seven days later in dry clothes On another occasion he killed an oil trader and resuscitated him A grand temple has been built at Samadari (Barmer) in the memory of Pipaji where a fair is held on every Chaitra Poornima According to folk lore Pipaji had resorted to tailoring for earning his daily bread, after *Diksha* Understandably, he is considered to be the ideal of the tailor society and a large number of his devotees belong to this class Pipaji inspired his disciples to develop ultimate faith in God and make Bhakti the nurturing force of their lives He urged them to shun evil social practices like untouchability and discrimination He condemned idol worship meaningless rituals and pilgrimage He urged people to pay due respects to *Sadguru* and to strive for *Satsang* The only path to God and salvation was *Namsmaran* and this path could be recognised only through Guru s grace

SAGUNA CULT

As mantioned earlier, the second line of evolution of the order of Ramananda was the *Saguna Bhakti*, where God was visualised *with an ornate form and high ideals and divine virtues were* ascribed to him Ramananda was a devotee of Lord Rama and comprehensively his disciples subscribed to the Vaishnav *Sampradaya* Ramnanda visited Rajasthan on the invitation of Pipaji The number of *Saguna* saints associated with the State is quite impressive Anantananda, a disciple of Ramananda had paid a visit to Sambhar Maldev the king of Marwar was initiated to Saguna Bhakti during the course of this visit His disciple was Krishnadas Payahari (1502-27 A D), who is famous for establishing the first ever *Sarva Pradhan Gaddi* of Vaishnavites by acquiring the Gaddi of the Nath cult in Galata (Jaipur) He baptised the king of Amer Prithviraj and his Queen Balabai Kilhadas was a disciple who emphasised Yogabhyas in parallel with the devotion to Ram Thus he propounded the Tapasi extension of Ramananda s *Vairagi* tradition by assimilating the *Yoga Sadhana* Another eminent disciple of Krishnadas was Agradas who inspired the king of Amer Man Singh to revive a number of temples As a result a number of temples and Ghats of Vrindavana Guru Govind Singh s birth place Vaikunthapur (Patna) and the shrine of Jagannath Dham were reconstructed Nabhadas the author of Bhaktamala was a disciple of Agradasji

On the other hand, Sursuranand the junior most disciple of Ramananda had a long association with Rajasthan, ever since the

visit of his Guru His tradiation was carried forth by Kevalananda and Madhavananda Narharidas (supposedly the Guru of Goswami Tulasidas) was a disciple of Madhvananda He establi shed a monastery called Phoova Math at Jhitarda (Marwar) In the lineage of Kevalananda were Anubhavananda Brahmananda Vrijananda Balananda and Govindji respectively, in order Govindji is accorded the credit of establishing Shri Vigraha of Lord Krishna at Nathdwara Kankroli Kota and Jaipur

THE TRADITION OF REFORMISTS

The Saints falling under the class of reformers channelised their efforts in two major directions viz the reformation of the society and the revitalisation of the religion By the middle ages the common man got so much entangled in the complex rituals and pompous ceremonies that it became almost impossible for him to discern a logical and simple path for meditation and knowledge This lead to wide-spread religious chaos and confusion On the other hand the society was infected with evils both acquired and inherent Moreover it was stratified into numerous castes and sub castes which nursed mutual ill will and practiced untoucha bility Hence it became necessary to redeem both *Dharma* and '*Samaj* Jambhoji and Jasnathji are the two earliest saints who undertook this task

JAMBHOJI

Jambhoji the founder of Bishnoi Sampradaya took birth on Bhadrapad Krishna Ashtami of 1451 A D at Pipasar (Nagaur) The name of his father was Lohatji Panwar (Rajput) and that of his mother Hansa Devi When he was only sevan years old he started going for grazing cattle The serene atmosphere of the pastoral lans helped to nurture his meditative introvert nature Even as a child, he spoke very little and people were astonished by the gravity of his thoughts when he eventually did It is believed that he met *Sadguru* when he was sixteen He took the vow of *Brahmacharya* and maintained it throughout his life After the death of his parents in 1483 A D , he left home and settled at Sambhara thal (Bikaner) It was here that his Bishnoi sect was founded in the year 1485 A D He attained salvation in 1526 A D on Margshirsh Krishna Navami His mortal remains were cremated at nearby Talawa village Now this place is known as Mukam

and a temple dedicated to his memory has been built here A big annual fair is held here on the new moon day of Falgun

Jambhoji s religion was humanitarian in character He formulated twenty nine rules for his followers He was a devotee of Lord Vishnu and like other contemporaries placed extreme faith in *Guru Satkarma* and *Satsang* He believed in the existence of indestructible life force in the form of soul and the eternity of the cycle of rebirth He preached against idol worship meat eating animal sacrifice and illogical rituals He condemned social evils like castism and untouchability He greatly emphasised virtues like purity benevolence and self satisfaction He instructed his devotees to refrain from cruelty theft falsehood anger greed and intoxication The fact that Jambhoji had a great foresight is evident from his rules regarding conservation of nature An aim of not disturbing the ecological balance can be visualised in his principle He asked his devotees to shun violence in all forms not to cut trees and not to kill or otherwise harm animals Moreover he stressed the need of preventing others also from indulging in such acts Thus it can be concluded that Jambhoji was far ahead of his times in his commitment regarding conservation of nature

JASNATHJI

Jasnathji was endowed with esoteric powers and is often called Mahayogi He was born on Kartika Shukla Ekadashi of 1482 A D at Katariasar in Bikaner He was brought up in the Jat family of Hamirji Jani and Rupande There are no significant literary evidences regarding his formal education and baptism He undertook *Brahmacharya* and carried out rigorous penance for a duration of twelve years at Gorakhmalia (Bikaner) He blessed Loonkaran saying that he would rule Bikaner This was proved true later Loha Pangal a sorcerer, who boasted of occult achievements was shown place by Jasnathji These incidents spread his fame far and wide Jasnathji dedicated his life to *Sadhana* and *Jan Kalyan* He took *Samadhi* on Ashwin Shukla Saptami of 1506 A D at the young age of twenty four at Katariasar People assemble here from far and wide thrice every year, on the seventh day of the light fortnight in the months of Ashwin Margashirsha and Chaitra to pay homage to Jasnathji

Jasnathji like Jambhoji believed in fusion and synthesis Consequently, he welcomed and adopted all good ideas and high morals notwithstanding their origin He accepted the God in *Nirguna Nirakar* form and condemned idol worship and other ostentatious practices He believed in the doctrine of *Karma* and in the destructibility of the universe He considered service of *Guru*, *Yoga Sadhana* and chanting of His name as the via media of approaching His Kingdom Like Jambhoji, he was an ardent social reformer and asked his followers to refrain from untoucha bility and discrimination on the basis of caste or creed His followers consisted mainly of Jats agriculturists and worker classes and later on the Jasnathi sect was formulated Thirty six principles have been laid down for Jasnathis These are concerned mainly with purity and sanctity in individual and collective life building up a high moral system in the society strict adherence to non violence kindness to birds and animals and regarding the womenfolk with highest esteem and honour Additionally Jasnathji strictly prohibited the consumption of meat and use of intoxicants Thus the principles of Jasnathi cult clearly fall under the category of a *Soddeshya Achar Samhita*

THE TRADITION OF NIRGUNA SAINTS

Medieval Bhakti movement has two distinct traditions viz the tradition of the Acharyas and the tradition of the saints Bhakti is usually identified with the tradition of saints The Acharyas reinterpreted scriptures and supported theism and redefined religious practices best suited for the prevailing situation The tradition represented by saints was primarily mystic and committed to spiritual humanism It may be further divided into two categories the traditional saintly movement and the heterodox system The *Sagunopasana* of saints like Tulsidas represents the traditional stream of Bhakti movement The heterodox tradition represented by Kabir Nanak and their followers was against any form of authoritarianism ritualism ceremonialism idol worship and discrimination among human beings on the basis of caste creed and sex etc They preached the principle of *Sadhana* i e path of devotion and meditation self realisation devotion for both the God and *Guru* It is believed that they were greatly influenced by Islam in general and Sufism in particular They, by and large believed in pure monotheism and social egalitarianism

The form of Bhakti which they propagated is known as *Nirguna* (qualityless) The *Nirgunopasak* rejects the concept of incarnation of God, special nomenclature and form of divinity and advocates loving remembrance and meditation The *Nirgunopasak* also rejects social and religious orthodoxy and pleads that personal spiritual freedom should not be encumbered by social discrimination or caste hierarchy community and religion They were of the firm opinion that pure Bhakti can be acquired only by *Sahaj Samadhi* and not by various futurological practices and ostentatious rituals

It is generally believed that the *Nirguna* cancept of Bhakti has been revived by the impact of Sufism which served as a bridge between Hindu and Muslim spirituality The saints of Rajasthan belonging to *Nirguna* tradition professed by and large, similar ideology and philosophy as was propagated by Kabir and Nanak in the Gangetic basin Perhaps this is precisely the reason why Dadu is known as Kabir of Rajasthan The saints of this tradition had a challenging job before them, because of the typical social and economic fabric of this part of the country They worked untiringly for the socio religious transformation, emancipation of the down trodden, women and underprivileged common man Their teachings were based on their own experiences and self realisation which had the potentiality of change and reform

NIRANJANI SAINTS

The Niranjani cult was founded by Haridas Niranjani The practices and ideology of Niranjanis seems to be greatly influenced by the mystic tradition of Nath sect They believe in the oneness of God and call Him Niranjan *Guru* is accorded the highest position of honour next only to *Brahma* as the sect lays great stress on Yoga *Sadhana* There are two sub divisions of Niranjanis, viz the *Sanyasis* and the *Grihasthas* The concept of castes and religion envisaged as the reason for discrimination among men has been condemened by them They do not accept the ideas of incarnation and idolism

HARIDAS NIRANJANI

It is said that Haridas was born in 1455 A D at Kapadod in Nagaur in a warrior clan, Sankhala His childhood name was Harisingh He resorted to dacoity for earning livelihood Thus passed forty four years of his life span before he met a saint who

opened his eyes to show him the destructibility of the world and made him realise the futility of his lifestyle He shunned violence at once threw his weapons in the 'Khosalye well and proceeded over to Tikhi Dungari where he started meditations and penance According to popular belief he is considered to be an incarnation of Gorakhnath He is said to have attained divine knowledge (Bodha) in 1513 A D Then he moved over to Didwana from where he proceeded to travel throughout the state for preaching and teaching the supernatural knowledge which had been bequeathed to him He returned to Didwana in 1528 A D and stayed there until the day he breathed his last on Falguna Shukla Shashthi of 1543 A D A large assemblage of people takes place between Margashirsha Shukla Panchami (Vasant Panchami) and Falguna Shukla Shashthi to venerate his Gaddi His order consisted of fifty two main disciples Later on the sect became divided into two forks called Jaihari or Naran panth and Haridasot Niranjani

Saint Haridas considered *Brahma* to be the essence of all living beings and *Atma* to be a manifestation of the *Brahma* *Brahma* is thus omnipresent omniscient devoid of virtues and evils and indestructible and is consequently *Neti Neti* *Brahma* through His esoteric powers has created the world and *Maya* which makes every living being dance to her tune He believed that the eternal puppeteer God is the source of all that happens in the world and so human beings should shun the pride of doing or achieving

TURASIDAS

The place of Mahayogi Turasidas in Niranjani cult is akin to that of Sundardas in Dadu Panth He was an accomplished thinker writer philosopher and *Sadhak* He is considered to have been born in the later half of the fifteenth circa Similarly his death is supposed to be some time in the later half of the sixteenth century He was a native of Sherpur Information about his lifetime and deeds is very limited in historical sources

SEVADAS

He was born on Chaitra Shukla Navami of 1641 A D in the household of Rajguru Hansrai of Purohit clan He took *Diksha* from Guru Dayaldas of Niranjani Cult in 1657 A D when he was only sixteen He had been in the service of *Guru* since the

tender age of seven He took the vow of celibacy and remained with *Guru* till 1689 A D According to literary evidence he travelled widely for the expansion of Niranjani *Sampradaya* Ultimately Sevadasji left for heavenly abode on Jyeshtha Krishna Pratipada 1741 A D through *Hath Yoga Samadhi* at Didwana, where a *Samadhi Sthal commemorates this event* His eminent disciple was Amar Purushji who was baptised by him in the year 1718 A D in Bikaner Niranjani cult flourished through the efforts of ninety six Siddha disciples of Amar Purushji

Though Niranjani cult believes in Nirguna theology yet it depicts a strong Vaishanvite influence This is evident in the practices of Ramdhuna Shri Krishna *Smaran*, wearing of Tilak and Kanthi and adoption of *Vaikunthi* method of cremation Yet idol worship is strictly prohibited in this cult

LALDAS

Laldas was the son of a poverty stricken Muslim Mev family of Dulotra clan He was born at village Dholidoob of Mewat (Alwar) on Shrawan Krishna Panchami of 1540 A D His father s name was Chandmal and his mother was Samada From early childhood he had to make a living by selling firewood in Alwar Consequently he had to spend a major part of the day in the solitude of forest, *where the tranquillity of the environment aided* the growth of devotion in his heart Later he was admitted to the order of ascetics by Faquir Gadan Chishti He then left his native village and raised a hut on a hillock named Singh Shila in Bandholi village People became his followers in large numbers This inflamed the envy of his opponents who tried to defame him by false allegations Pained at heart he moved over to Todi Naharoli and Rasgan villages respectively, in the next few years In the end, Laldas settled down at Nagala village Yet his enemies did not leave him for good and in despair they even tried to incite the administration against him Though they were successful in causing a lot of inconvenience, but failed to inflict any serious harm as a large group of followers stood firmly behind him and supported him He remained in Nagala until 1648 A D when at the ripe age of 108 years he received the call from heavens He was cremated at Sherpur A Kabra and Makbara stand at the spot His memorials have been constructed at Dholidoob and Nagala also

The Philosophy of saint Laldas resembles that of Kabir He believed in *Nirguna Brahma* who is omnipotent and whose grace can be evoked by approaching Him through *Sadguru* and by continually chanting His name He emphasised the virtue of good company Like other saints of his times he too raised his voice for social reforms and against age old irrational caste system and social hierarchy He firmly believed that in the eyes of the Creater there cannot be any discrimination between the objects of His creation, on any basis According to him love to humanity is love to God Imagination of caste as the basis of this divine love is beyond comprehension He criticised all pompous socio religious rituals and observances icon worship pilgrimage bathing in sacred rivers offering of oblations to the so called various manifestation of God etc He declared that the prevailing enemity jealousy hatred and violence between various communities is irrational and illogical These are not going to assist man in the pursuit of the truth Tirelessly he toiled for communal harmony and to establish identity between Ram and Rahim Perhaps for this high ideal he was respected and honoured by all communities of his times Like other saints he emphasized the dignity of labour and faith in the system of being detached with the material life even while leading the life of a householder He founded a separate order known as Laldasi *Sampradaya* The followers of this order are drawn mostly from among the backward and artisan classes It is interesting to point out that even though they are Mev Muslims the followers of this sect had many common factors with Hindus They chant the name of Ram keep *Shikhas* avoid marriage between the people of same *Gotra* and so on A fair is organised annually on Ashwin Shukla Poornima at Dholidoob

PARABRAHMA SAINTS

In the tradition of *nirgunopasak* saints certain minor differences and distinctions place them in various categories Although by and large their philosophies echo similar doctrinal ordinations but the practice and the intensity of faith do categorise them into different classes In fact Bhakti itself is an extremely diverse phenomenon and no saint and his ideas can be strictly compartmentalised into a distinct class For example the expression Ram has been universally accepted by saints but each of them attaches a different meaning to it according to his individual perception

Further, as regards to *Yoga sadhana* and mysticism they appear to have common views but the intensity and dimensions are quite different Even *sagunopasak* or poet devotees seem to be greatly influenced by these elements It is so because, they represent the hopes and aspirations of the masses and logically, for the sake of one they cannot ignore the other The most luminous example of this theory of ideological synthesis is Mirabai, the famous saint poetess of Rajasthan Though a staunch devotee of Lord Krishna her poetry is full of mytical ideas and Yoga She never shied from the use of phrasology of Siddhas and Nath Yogis

DAYALDAS

Dadudayal, though born in Ahmedabad (Gujarat) has been accorded the epithet of Kabir of Rajasthan He was born on Falgun Shukla Ashtami of 1544 A D in a Dhunia (Cotton cleaner) family He was adopted and brought up by a Brahman Lodhiram Nagar At the tender age of eleven he took *Diksha* from saint Vraddhanand Then he dedicated his life to meditation and rigorous *Sadhana* At the age of eighteen, he reached Kardala (Nagaur) where he spent six years in hard penace He came to Sambhar in 1568 A D and commenced his professional life as cotton cleaner and spiritual life as a luminous godman who preached for the welfare of the humanity Wearied by the perpetual intrigues of his opponents he moved over to Amer alongwith twenty five of his disciples and stayed there until 1589 A D In 1585 A D he paid a visit to Fatehpur Sikri and met the Mughal Emperor Akbar After leaving Amer Dadu travelled throughout Marwar and Dhoondhar (Jaipur) to distribute among the common masses the knowledge which he had acquired In 1602 he settled at Narayana village of Phulera and here itself he renounced the material world on Jyestha Krishna Ashtami of 1603 A D As directed by the saint himself, his mortal remains were placed under the hillock of Bhairana at Dadu Khol This spot is considered sacred by his followers who are now recognised as a separate cult Dadu Panthi

In addition to being a saint and philosopher Dadu was an eminent poet His literary creations strike at the roots of sensation in the heart of every man He is considered to be the conceiver of a novel religio social order Dadu placed faith in the *Parabrahma* who has an *ethernal presence in all worldly beings* His God is omniscient and omnipotent and cannot be sought within the bounds

of a frame or form Like other contemporary saints Dadu believed in the power of trinity of *Sadguru*, *Nam smaran* and *Satsang* He stressed the need of social and religious harmony and integration The cherished dream of his life was to unite all the divergent faiths in one everlasting bond of love and brotherhood To give effect to his ideal he founded the *Brahma sampradaya* or *Parabrahma Sampradaya* It is precisely to fulfil his mission that he exhorted both Hindus and Muslims to shun evils superstitions mutual aversion and all sense of ego etc and surrender completely their lives to God for in His presence all men and women stand as equals God resides in the hearts of people and he can only be realised through meditation and surrender The service to humanity is His service According to Dadu one should be humble compassionate fearless dynamic and free from egotism One should refrain from adoption of meaningless forms and semblances of faith and sectarianism The path of self realisation thus becomes easier He laid great emphasis on purity of thought character intensions and actions Being himself a householder he believed that the natural life of a householder was best suited for spiritual realisation Being humanitarian in set up his cult propounds the ideal of universal brotherhood and respect for all religions

At his command his disciples collected and circulated the devotional compositions of different sects It was a novel idea for the realisation of religious and social integration

Dadu had 152 main disciples Hundred of them were *Vitragi* (detached) while the rest established their *Gaddis* and *Paramparas* Those who join Dadu Panth eschew idolism shave their heads and wander in all directions preaching morality and persuance of high ideals The religious movement initiated by Dadu continued to gather momentum under his followers and disciples Later on the sect became divided into five sub sects viz Khalasa Virakta Uttarade Khaki and Naga All Dadu Panthis assemble at Narayana every year in the month of Falguna between *Panchami* and *Ekadashi* of the Shukla Paksh and organise a fair which reaches its zenith on Ashtami

The poetic compositions of the saint have been collected in the form of Dadu Dayal ki Bani on the lines of collection of the poetic compositions of Kabir

RAJJAB

Physically robust and stout Rajjab one of the renouned disciples of Dadu was born in Sanganer in 1567 A D in the family of a respected Pathan His father was a petty officer in the army of Amer Right from childhood, Rajjab showed inclination towards spirituality and was different from other children of his age group While going for his marriage he happened to meet Dadu, and was awed and impressed by his sermons to such an extent that he decided to be initiated to Dadu s sect It is believed that he achieved the spiritual knowledge in the robe of bridegroom The Guru ordained him to remain in same attire for the rest of his life It is important to note that even during the life of Dadu people were so much influenced by Rajjab that many of them became his disciples The order of Rajjab is known as Rajjab Panth Rajjabawat and is ordinarily included within the fold of Dadu In the last days of his life, Rajjab retired to the forest for intense meditation and ascetic life

Closely following his Guru Dadu Rajjab visualised the Absolute God like *Shunya* which has no beginning midway or end The real experience of God is only possible in the state of separation from Him The individual self is another form of the Absolute But due to *Maya* the individual always forgets its real character The material world is short lived and subject to decay Though it appears to be real but it is due to ignorance In reality only God is true while the world is only an image The socio religious philosophy of Rajjab is more or less similar to that of his preceptor He too was opposed to superstitions ostentatious rituals discrimination between man and man prevailing social evils and laid emphasis on *Namsmaran* and *Sadhana*

SUNDARDAS

Sundardas Chhote was born on Chaitra Shukla Nawami 1596 A D The name of his parents was Parmanand Chokha and Sati, who were Busar Khandelwal Vaishyas Dadu initiated him to his fold while on tour to Dausa at a very tender age of six years He was put under the strict supervision of Jagjivan Das who was Dadu s disciple Other disciples of Dadu such as Pragdas and Santdas also had great intimacy with Sundardas At the age of eleven years he accompanied Jagjivandas to Kashi Besides learning the hexagonal system of Indian

Sankhya Yoga Vedanta etc he undertook the study of traditional religion social life and spirituality also, After returning to Fatehpur (shekhawati area) he practiced Yogic exercises conti nuously for six years living in a cave He was accompanied by six saints viz Pragadas Santdas Narayandas Bhikamdas Dhanasidas and Jagjivandas The fame of his ability and esoteric achievements spread like a forest fire, beyond Rajasthan also He undertook extensive religious tours for the propagation of his ideas *to as distant states as Panjab Haryana Uttar Pradesh* Orissa Bengal and Bihar In the field of literary excellence and erudition as poet he was second to none especially in the fold of Dadu and can only be compared with Goswami Tulasidas the immortal author of Ramcharitmanas During the last phase of his life Chhote Sundardas went to meet Rajjab at Sanganer, but by that time Rajjab was no more The feelings evoked by the news of death of Rajjab were so intense that he fell ill and died there itself on Kartika Shukla Ashtami 1689 A D The central place of the fold of Sundardas in the initial stages was Dausa but now it is in Fatehpur where some of the material objects pertaining to his life such as cot Topa (head dress) and books have been preserved Sundardas belonged to the *Nirguna* order of devotees The God was *Niranjan* for him the experience of which cannot be expressed in any number of words He identified *Brahma* with *Atma* It is due to illusion that people discriminate between the two but in fact distinction in any form whatsoever is non existent According to Sunderdas only the Absolute truth is eternal The rest are only hallucinations He believed in the working of destiny or predetermination of the life of a human being on the basis of his fate He also advocated the concept of *Karmavada* and emphasised the need of practice of *Nawadha Bhakti* The various forms of Yogic exercises and their spiritual aspects have been highlighted by Sundardas He vividly described *Ashtanga Yoga* in his writings *Sundar vilas* is said to be his unrivalled devotional composition comparable only with *Surasagar* of Surdas

BAKHANA

According to an estimate saint Bakhana was born in Nara yana sometime around 1550 A D His followers associate him with Lakhara Kalal Mirasi and Rajput classes A householder

saint, Bakhana was a poet and musician His social and religious ideas are most similar to those of Dadu He died in Narayana sometime between 1603 and 1623 A D and his seat was established at Narayana itself

GARIBDAS

Garibdas was one of the principle disciples of Dadu He was born in 1575 A D at Sambhar He succeeded Dadu after the *Guru s* demise He was humble in nature modest in behaviour and meek in appearance It became difficult for him to run the organisation with his extraordinarily simple nature Feeling greatly disillusioned with the state of affairs in the Panth he left the seat of pontiff and nominated Kewalram in his place He died in 1636 A D at Narayana

RAMSNEHI SAINTS

Closely following the example of Dadu Panth the foundation of Ramsnehi Sampradaya was laid It was nurtured by a host of enlightened saints and even in present times it overshadows other faiths prevalent in Rajasthan The feature which segregates it from Dadu's and other Panths is the harmonic blending of ideals of religious traditions of India It adopted Ram *nam* funeral practices and idealistic moral code of conduct from Hinduism non violence from Jainism and contemporary social and religious reformist ideology from *Nirguna* saints There is a controversy regarding the identity of founder of Ramsnehi order According to the most popular opinion Saint Ramcharan is regarded as the founder of this cult but according to other sources it may be summaris d that the followers of Ramanand were later secluded into four distinct group each calling itself as Ramsnehi i e lover of Ram The branch belonging to Shahpura was founded by Ramcharanji (1719–98 A D) The other three branches and their founders are respectively Ren (founder Dariyavji 1676–1758 A D) Sinhathal (founder—Hariramdasji) and Khedapa (founder—Ramdasji 1726–98 A D)

DARIYAVJI (MARWAR)

He was born in Jaitaran (Pali) on Bhadrapad Krishna Ashtami of 1676 A D His parents were cotton cleaners Mansa and Geega At an early age he migrated to Ren in Nagaur after the death of his father and chanced to meet Swaroopanand who prophecied that he would be a Siddha Faquir some day Dariyavji accompanied

Swaroopanand to Kashi and studied Upnishadas Puranas astrology Holy Qaran besides learning Sanskrit and Persian languages After returning to Ren he got initiated to the tradition of Payahari by saint Pemdas in the year 1712 A D Later he came to Khejada (Nagaur) and engrossed his faculties in Ram *Sadhana* He started preaching the gist of his own realisations and experiences and for that he undertook extensive tours of adjoining regions He died in 1758 A D at Ren where his disciple Harkharam constructed his Samadhi in 1818 A D The Samadhi is commonly known as Dariyavji ka Deval Than A fair is organised annually on the full moon day of Chaitra at this place

An advocate of communal harmony he believed in universal brotherhood and opined that the ultimate truth for self realisation is the same for all men and for all faiths According to his interpretation the word Ram is composed of two elements Ra stands for Ram and Ma stands for Mohammed Therefore there is no difference between the two communities He also believed in the traditional trinity of *Namsmaran Satguru* and *Satsang* When combined together they are bound to yield desired results and illuminate the path to God Like other contemporary saints he also condemmed outward *Sadhana* and exposed the futility of idol worship pilgrimage irrational rituals etc

RAMCHARAN

The founder of Ramsnehi Sampradaya in general and Shahpura branch of the order in particular Ramcharan was born in Soda village of Jaipur on Margashirsha Shukla Chaturdashi of the year 1719 A D Ramkishan (childhood name of Ramcharan) was son of Bija Vaishya Bokhatram and Deuji He was very intelligent and possessed the qualities of head and heart right from the beginning Although appointed minister by the king of Jaipur he foresook the job in the favour of the pursuit of Sadguru of his dreams He got his Sadguru in Maharaj Kriparamji belonging to the tradition of Krishnadas Payahari a disciple of Ramanand in Dantada village of Mewar After being initiated to the fold of Ram Mantra Ramkishan became Ramcharan He practiced rigorous Sadhana continuously for seven years and undertook religious tours He undertook another decade long sadhana around Bhilwara and later went to Shahpura where he left for his heavenly abode on Vaishakha Krishna Panchami of 1798 A D A Ramdwara was

constructed in Shahpura in his memory He left behind him hundreds of followers out of which 225 were his disciples and twelve were main disciples to run the fold for the good of people Phool Dol festival is observed every year in the months of Falguna and Chaitra varying from branch to branch of this sect Its Ramdware are scattered throughout Rajasthan and serve as centres of its propagational activities

The ideas and concepts of Ramcharan were mostly similar to those of Dadu and other Nirguna Margi saints His God is qualityless and known as Ram He is omnipresent omniscient and eternal and can be realised through complete surrender, devotion and *Sadhna* For the realisation of God, *Namsmaran* guidance of Guru and remaining in the company of saintly people i e *Satsang* is essential While Guru is the navigator of the boat of life, chanting of His name is the sail of this boat and *Satsang* is the crew for leading the boat to the lighthouse of eternal Bliss

Like a true saint he also advocated the acquisition of virtues and abstaining from vices for the purpose of transformation of the socio religious fabric of the country He exposed the futility of observing irrational rites such as worshipping idols undertaking pilgrimage fasting discriminating between man and man He cautioned people against social evils and asked them to refrain from using intoxicants committing violence and eating non vegetarian food

HARIRAMDAS

The founder of Sinhathal branch of Ramsnehi sect namely Saint Hariramdas was son of Bhagchandra Joshi and Rama He flourished in the eighteenth century Right from early childhood he showed an inclination towards spiritual thinking and Yogashastra In the year 1743 A D on Ashadha Krishna Trayodashi he took *Diksha* from Jaimaldas of Dulachasar Every evening he used to walk a distance of about fourteen miles to enjoy the company of his *Guru* during the night This routine continued for a period of six months Then the *Guru* ordered him to pursue Sadhana at his native village But he continued visiting his *Guru* every tenth day until he achieved self realisation

After receiving the treassure of divine knowledge he started distributing it among masses wandering from village to village in the then states of Bikaner and Marwar At the time of call from

heavens on Chaitra Shukla Saptami 1778 A D, however he was at Sinhathal

Saint Hariramdas had seven principle disciples These were Narayandas Biharidas Amiram Daidas Lakshmandas Aduram and Ramdas His sect gained popularity mostly in Marwar Jangal Dhoondhad and Hadoti regions

The Saint emphasised the need of continual recital of the name of God His 'Rama was symbolic representation of *Nirguna* God Only Guru can serve as the mediator between a seeker and God until such time as He deems it fit to bestow the divine grace on him Like other Ramsnehi saints he condemned social evil and religious practices like castism religious orthodoxy violence and ill treatment of women and downtrodden underprivileged classes He believed that one should respect all religions and the society should be free from the clutches of useless hierarchies For the ascetics and oblates he suggested the inclusion of Yogic practices in meditation

RAMDAS

Ramdas was born at Bhikamkore village of Jodhpur on Falguna Shukla Trayodashi in 1728 A D He belonged to the Meghwal community which is considered even today to be socially backward His mother Anbhi died when he was merely a child Then his father Shadulji moved over to Khedapa Even as a boy Ramdas was deeply interested in religion and devotion He had already undertaken Diksha from twelve different Gurus before he met saint Hariramdas and his quest for the *Sadguru* came to an end He was initiated to the Ramsnehi cult on Vaishakh Shukla Ekadashi in the year 1752 A D He then undertook austerities and tread on the path of *Sadhana* for self realisation On being successful he delivered sermons in many villages of the nearby princely states to impress upon the natives the need of channelising all their endovours to the professing of Ram Bhakti In 1765 A D, he settled at Khedapa People became his disciples in large numbers When the number of disciples became very large by the year 1778 A D he moved over to Ram Mahola some distance away as suggested by his Guru

His opponents were successful in their intrigues and got him expelled from Marwar in 1790 A D by Maharaja Vijay Singh Then he wandered through Mewar and Dhoondhad aud reached

Singhthal Later the Maharaja saw reason and realising his mistake personally invited Ramdasji to return to Khedapa He complied after many requests in 1792 A D He undertook tours to Godwar Mewar and Malawa in 1795 A D, for the Kalyan of masses He renounced the material world on Ashadh Krishna Saptami of 1798 A D, when he was at Khedapa The successor to the seat of pontiff of Khedapa sub sect of Ramsnehi Panth was his son Dayaldas

Like other Ramsnehi saints Ramdas stressed the need for religio social reformation and redemption He visualised Ram as the *Janak* of all beings and believed in his *Nirguna Swaroop* He professed and preached the deployment of Yogic practices for the goal of self realisation He believed in social equality and condemned ostentatious rituals He emphasised *Ram Jap* and considered *Guru* as the one who leads through the darkness of world

THE TRADITION OF SAGUNA SAINTS

Saguna (qualified) *Bhakti* is a form of *Vaishnava Bhakti* which has a tradition of worshipping God in the form of idol in a temple with various rituals associated with it The *Sagunapasaka* believes in the doctrine of incarnations of the Divine manifestation of God or *Lila* and adoration or worship of God by adopting various means such as *Navdha Bhakti Samanya Bhakti Sadhana Bhakti Bhava Bhakti* and *Prema Bhakti* etc *Acharyas* such as Ramanuja opine that *Prapatti* or absolute surrender to God is the ultimate goal of all human beings This can be attained through Bhakti *Nitya Lila* of God has been conceived so as to present an ideal before the devotee and to allow him to develop a personal relationship with God

In Rajasthan the *Saguna* form of *Bhakti Sadhana* which became popular was Vaishnava *Pushti Bhakti* following the tradition of Nimbarka and Vallabh According to this one must rely on the grace of God which alone can evoke *Bhakti* as love in the heart of His devotees *Sneh* or love have been regarded as the *Sthayi Bhava* of devotion

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries followers of Nimbarka and Vallabh settled in Rajasthan and propagated the concept of *Pushti Marga* and thus popularised the *Sagunopasana Bhakti* in this region

MIRABAI

Mirabai reigns supreme as the composer of devotional lyrics dedicated to Lord Krishna There is a controversy regarding her date of birth and and life span According to the most commonly accepted view she was born on Vaishakh Shukla Triteeya of 1498 A D as the only daughter of Kasabu Kanwar and Ratan Singh Rathore Her place of birth was village Kudaki Her mother died when Mira was very young Hence she was brought up in the household of her grandfather Doodaji of Merta near Jodhpur In 1516 A D she was married to Kunwar Bhojaraj son of Maharana Sanga of Mewar She was widowed in 1523 A D and thus ended the duty of discharging marital obligation Maharana Sanga and Ratna Singh his younger son also left for their heavenly abode by the year 1530 A D and Vikramajit Singh ascended the throne On the maternal side Mira s uncle Viram Dev was expelled from Merta after his defeat at the hands of Rao Maldev of Jodhpur

Seemingly these events should have caused extreme distress to Mira but she viewed them as freedom from worldly bondages The intensity of love directed towards God conceived as Krishna totally absorbed her personality and interests and everything else took a backseat and became meaningless She shunned the wordly pleasures and luxary natural to her social status She visualised Krishna as her husband and adopted a way of life which invited criticism from the conservative Rajput society of the times Rana Vikramjit Singh considered her to be a disgrace to the family and created all possible hurdles in the way of her *Sadhana* harassed her and even conspired against her life But each time some supposedly divine presence and thaumaturge caused failure of his designs and protected Mira from harm

Mira left Chittor for Merta where she continued singing the praises of her Lord Following the occupation of Merta by Maldev she proceeded on a pilgrimage to various places For some time she stayed in Vrindavana and then left for Dwarika Mira s soul parted from the material physique and set forth on the eternal journey on Margashirsha Shukla Panchami of 1546 A D

Although it is difficult to deduce specific philosophy from the verses of Mira, yet mystical thoughts can be gleaned from them According to her meeting with Krishna or realisation is like a

game of hide and seek It is the natural tendency of the soul to seek God and attain the state of fusion with Him Her poetic expressions are full of profound emotion Her verses are not loaded with philosophical overtones Instead they are the utterance of the heart and seek to establish a spiritual relationship between human soul and God Some of her poetry undoubtedly bears the impact of symbolism and imagery of Nath Siddha tradition which was popular at that time Words like *Anhad Naad*, [illegible] *Mudra*, *Jogi Agam Desh Gagan Mandal* and *Trikuti* have been used freely in Mira s literature This fact proves that she was influenced by *Yoga* and *Siddha* tradition in life and thought, However the poetess saint adopted Madhurya Bhakti for the realisation of Krishna

NAGARIDAS

Krishna Singh or Samant Singh (original names of Nagaridas) was born at Kishangarh on *Paush Krishna Dwadashi* 1699 A D He was son of Raja Raj Singh and Kama Right from his childhood he possessed the qualities of head and heart He proved his prowess or bravery by conquering the supposedly inconquerable fort of Thooni when he was only eighteen years of age His mother died a couple of years later This had a great impact on him and he became more interested in devotion and literary and artistic achievements The royal family already professed *Pushti Marga* Vaishnavism In 1725 he was made heir-apparent of the state but this did not deter Samant Singh from the pursuit of art literature and music After the death of his father Raj Singh in 1748 A D the state of Kishangarh was split into two parts Consequently he got the sovereignty of the northern part including Roop Nagar, whereas his brother Bahadur Singh got the southern part including Kishangarh Detached from the material world due to conflict and conspiracy in the royal family he abdicated the throne in 1756 A D in favour of his son Sardar Singh and went to *Vrindavan* to live there permanently He exhibited supreme sacrifice and forgiveness. He praised Bahadur Singh far he was instrumental in showing him the right path of *Bhakti*

Like Mira, Nagaridas was not interested in founding any sect or *Peetha* He was completely devoted to Shreeji and merged his personality in Him He believed in true *Bhakti* through *Nam-Smaran* and *Lila Madhuri Gan* He was so broad minded that the followers of different sects used to include him within their fold For example the Vaishnavites and the Sufis regarded him as

belonging to their faith He can be visualised as an embodiment of an ideal devotee In the span of about four decades he wrote as many as seventy books on various aspects of devotional literature He was a multi linguist and was well versed in Sanskrit, Persian Rekhta and various dialects of Hindi His writings were related to politics ethics literature etc Like other saints of his times he depicted a deep conviction for humanism and uniformity of utteranees and action He emphasised the acquisition of ethical and moral virtues and shunning of vices Besides being a magician of words he was a great painter He was one of the propounders of Kishangarh style of painting which is a class in itself

CHARANDAS

On the Bhardrapad Shukla Triteeya of 1703 A D a son was born at Dehra village in Mewat in the Dhusar Vaishya family of Muralidhar and Kunjon He was named Ranjit (childhood name of Charandas) He was orphaned at the tender age of seven and was brought up at Delhi by his maternal grand father Here developed a taste for *Bhakti* and became so deeply involved that he neither received formal education nor married At the age of sixteen he felt the need of an able Guru and began wandering in his search His quest culminated in *Diksha* from *Muni Sukhdeo* three years later He accepted Shrimad Bhagwat as the basic *Dharma granth* Charandas adopted the method of Yogic *Sadhana* for the achievement of self realisation He indulged in the same for fourteen years around Delhi After the attainment of divine *Jnana* he undertook tours of adjoining states He founded the *Charandasi* order in about 1730 A D He had fifty two main disciples and followers of his cult are found in Rajasthan Delhi Panjab Haryana Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh In 1782 A D Charandas visited Jaipur Later in the year on *Margashirsha Krishna Saptami* while he was at Delhi he breathed his last A *Samadhi* has been built there to commemorate him His followers assemble there from far and wide on *Vasant Panchami* to pay homage to their revered Guru

Charandas emphasised the unity of God recitation of His name and the greatness of Guru whom he regarded as the torch bearer who illuminates the high path in darkness prevalent in human life Like Mira he too was aware of the *Nirguna* God but adopted *Sagunopasana* He accorded *Satsang* with a place at par with Guru He sought to popularise Yogic exercises The

doctrine of *Karma* and *Karma Phal* was adopted by him from Gita He denounced idol worship pompous ceremonies and useless rites He laid stress on right conduct alongwith *Shila Santosh* and *Daya*

Although he advocated detachment from the world yet he admitted *Grihastha* as well as *Virakta* people to his cult He formulated some prohibitive rules which were to be followed compulsarily by all Charandasis These were concerned mainly with regulation of social behaviour and for the moral upliftment of the society Some of these may be enumerated as abstaining from falsehood and harsh words not committing violence and theft and shunning pride and enemity

MAVJI

Mavji was born in the Audichya Brahman family of Dalmarusi and Kesar Bai on *Vasant Panchami* of 1715 A D He was a native of Sabala village of Doongarpur He was greatly influenced by the devotional and hardworking attitude of his father He left home at the age of twelve and undertook austerities in a cave on the banks of confluence of Mahi and Soma rivers He received divine enlightenment here itself, on *Margshirsha Shukla Edadashi* of 1728 A D On the same day he laid the foundation stone of *Veneshwar Dham* He founded the *Nishkalank* Sampradaya He breathed his last in 1744 A D Temples have been built at Sabala, Panjpur Veneshwar and Dhalavala in Doongarpur Senspur in Mewar and Baroda in Banswara in his memory In the temple at Sabala, he is shown as four armed deity mounted on horse The monastery here is headed by his successors who come from Audichya Brahman families and who observe celibacy The major assemblage of the people belonging to Nishkalank cult takes place at Veneshwar (on the confluence of the rivers Soma Mahi and Jokham) on the Poornima of Margashirsha every year

Like Mira Mavji was a staunch devotee of Lord Krishna an incarnation of Lord Vishnu He admitted to his sect people from all castes and sex without any prejudice He preached the doctrine of fusion and synthesis so as to build an egalitarian society His followers are drawn from all different castes such as Brahmans, Rajputs Goldsmiths Tailors Patels Bheels, Meenas Rawats Kolis Kurmis Weavers and Cobblers His teaching have been Compiled in books viz *Vani Jnana Bhandara, Akala Ramana Suranand Bhajan Stotra Jnana Ratna Mala Kalinga Haran Chopra* and *Njaya* These have been written in Vagdi dialect of Rajasthan

SUFISM IN RAJASTHAN

Centuries that followed the establishment and growth of Islam witnessed the observations and innovations among it followers which were quite contrary to the ideals and spirit of the preachings of the Prophet To preserve the original ideology and code of conduct it was considered imperative by its devoted and committed believers to redeem it from further pollution The terms Sufi *Wali Allah* (Protege of God) *Dervish* and *Faqir* are applied to Muslim spiritualists who attempt to achieve a development of their intuitive faculties through ascetic exercises contemplation renunciation and self denial There is no doubt that sufism or Tasawwaf conjures up images of such institutions and customs as saint cults fascination with the occult thaumaturgic and orgiastic practices a mysterious world of visions and miracles erotic poems *and lascivious dancing*

Not withstanding the causes and circumstances for its initial evolution by the twelfth century Tasawwaf had become an insepa rable aspect of islamic culture and was accepted by the Muslim world in due course of time

According to Sufi saints sufism is as old as Islam itself Muhammad was himself a Sufi and continued to lead an exceed ingly austere pure and ascetic life even while organizing his community Some of his companions used to practise asceticism purification love poverty and self mortification in persuit of the Universal self They were called *Ahl al suffa* or *Ashab i suffa* After the passing away of the Prophet they continued to prefer righteousness combined with godliness and assured for over more prayer

The earliest centres of Islam were Mecca Medina Basra and Kufa But upto the end of tenth century Iran Syria Egypt and Baghdad came under its influence and the Sufi movement also

blossomed in these regions It may be pointed out that the transformation of different regions into centres of Sufism did not occur *in isolation It s majority followers* were *initially converts* from other religious communities

Another feature of Sufism was that gradually the movement was crystallised into various *Silsilas*, i e Orders as chain of lineages through which different sufis could be traced It became individualistic in approach and provided the Sufis greater respectability The founders of the *Silsilas* often linked *themselvss with* the Prophet through either Ali or Abu Bakar The Sufis belonging to *Silsilas* appears to have been great champions of synthesis and assimilation of various elements of other religions 'Influences such as Neo Platonism the monastic tradition of Buddhism and Christianity and Vedantist and Yogic philosophy were all Islamized by members of *Silsilas* in such a way as to make them virtually unidentifiable Establishment of *Khanqahs* may be regarded as one of the important innovations especially by Suharawardi *Silsila* It is believed that *Khanqahs* besides offering *board and lodging* perfecting ethical and moral conduct, provided the corporate life among its members and transmission of mystical knowledge acquired by founders of the order to further generations of Sufis

Perhaps Islam and Sufism was first introduced in India by Arab traders in the Malabar coast With the conquest of Sind between 711 and 712 A D by Muhammad bin Qasim there started a process of settlement of the families of conquerors and conver sion of the local population The conquest and annexation of the Panjab by Mahmud of Ghazna prompted many Sufis to settle in the region The earlier Sufis to settle in Sind was Shaikh Safiu d-Din Kaziruni Similarly al Hajwiri settled in Lahore at the command of his *pir* Although he visited Lahore in c 1035 A D but after 1067 A D till his death in 1072 73 A D he lived in Lahore The Saikh was better known as Data Ganj Bakhsh (Distributor of Treasure) and was respected by one and all It was at the tomb of the Shaikh in Lahore that the founder of the Chistiya *silsila* in India Khwaja Muinud Din Chishti undertook ascetic exercises

THE CHISHTI SILSILA AND RAJASTHAN AJMER

The Chishti order of Sufis is generally regarded as an Indian one primarily because other branches originating from Chisht a town in Afghanisatan did not survive for long The decline of Sufi centres of Chisht and Firozkuh forced its followers to move elsewhere or live as wandering *dervishes* Out of such great Sufi Khwaja Muinu Din Chishti came all the way to Ajmer and settled here for good

KHWAJA MUINUD DIN CHSHTI

No definite account regarding the early life of Khwaja is available before he settled in Ajmer in 1206 A D The Khwaja s simple and ascetic life style was an inspiration for all communities irrespective of their faith far as a true sufi he attached no importance to material power and wealth stressing only piety simplicity and devotion to God Numerous stories regarding performance of miracles by the Khwaja on different occassions were got circulated among the masses and it appears that he became a legand soon after his demise He was the embodiment of Sufi virtues spirituality and possessed the supernaturnl power to perform fantastic miracles especially for the good of the people who had complete faith in him

According to a popular story Rai Pithaura (Prithiviraja III Chouhan) the ruler of Ajmer resented the presence of the Khwaja in Ajmer but the eminence and his power to perform miracles refrained him from attempting any misadventure The prophesy of the Khwaja regarding Rai Pithaura came true He was defeated by Sultan Muhammad Ghori and made prisoner

There is yet another story regarding his discussion with a *dervish* pertaining the characteristics of a true ascetic The Khwaja after giving reply in his own way asked his disciple Hamidud Din Nagori to explain them in detail Shaikh Hamidud Din described the ascetic path as follows

1 One should not earn money
2 One should not borrow money from anyone
3 One should not reveal to anyone nor seek help from anyone if one has eaten nothing even for seven days

4 If one gains plenty of food money, grain or clothing one should not keep anything untill the following day

5 One should not curse anyone, if anyone is very hurt one should pray to God to guide one s enemy towards the right path

6 If one performs a virtuous deed, one should consider that the source of the virtue is due either to one s *pir s* kindness to the intercession of the Prophet Mohammed on one's behalf, or to devine mercy

7 If one perform an evil deed one should consider one s evil self responsible for the action and try to protect oneself from such deeds Fearing God one should be careful to avoid actions which may involve him again in evil

8 Having fulfilled all the above conditions one should regularly fast during the day and spend the night in prayer

9 *One should remain quite and speak only when it is imperative* to do so The *Sharia* makes it unlawful both to talk incess antly and keep totally silent One should utter only such words as those which please God

(Quoted from S A A Rizvi s A History of Sufizm in India, vol I p 1)

According to the mystic path of the Khwaja the most superior kind of worship was to assist the helpless Those who aspire to become friend of God should possess three virtues viz munifi cence like an ocean kindness like the sunshine and humility like the earth

At the ripe age of ninety seven the Khwaja died in Ajmer on 16 March 1236 A D His mortal remains were buried at the place where he spent most of his life time A tomb was built over his grave by Khwaja Husain Nagauri Further constructions were undertaken by the rulers of Malwa which were extended later by Mughal emperors Jahangir and Aurangzeb Akbar visited the Dargah of the Khwaja in 1562 1568 & 1570 A D On the occassion of the birth of crown Prince Salim he reached Ajmer by foot from Agra in February 1570 A D to offer his homage to the Khwaja He also entrusted the administration of the shrine to one Shaikh Muhammad Bukhari who in turn manage the whole affair

efficiently Akbar Jahangir and Shah Jahan liberally distributed gifts for the maintenance of the Dargah from time to time Aurangzeb who was generally averse to music allowed the continuation of routine musical performances in the memory of the Khwaja

NAGAUR SHAIKH HAMIDUD DIN

Like Ajmer Nagaur in Rajasthan was another important centre of Sufi movement Nagaur rose to prominence primarilly due to personality of Shaikh Hamidud Din who was one of the disciples of Khwaja Moinud Din Chishti Shaikh Hamidud Din received early education under famous teachers like Maulana Halwai and Shaikh Juwaiyni He acquired good command over Arabic Persian and Hindawi a dialect of Rajasthan He became disciple of Khwaja at Ajmer and accompanied him on Khwaja s visit to Delhi He completely withdrew from the material world and adopted ascetic life On being asked by his *Pir* to request for anything from God, the Shaikh desired nothing According to him once he surrendered himself to the divine will there remains nothing to be desired He was better known as Sultanut Tarikin (King of Hermits) among his followers and admirors He described nine lofty principles as guide to the mystic and ascetic path when ordered to do so by his mentor Khwaja Moinud Din Chishti His path was different from other Chishti Saints as he believed in complete austirity poverty non violence and withdrawal from wordly adulation and notoriety of any kind Treasure or wealth for him was like serpents which are poisonous and harmful by nature According to the Shaikh knowledge is essential for all human beings Closely following the life of the Prophet is the most superior kind of Faith Man should abandon all thoughts of wordly gain in the pursuit of the unseen (God)

The Shaikh died on 1 November 1274 A D and was buried at Nagaur He was succeeded by his grandson Shaikh Faridud Din Mahmud who got royal patronage in the Court of Muhammad bin Tughluq

KHWAJA HUSAIN

Nagaur was re established as a strong centre of Sufism by Khwaja Husain Nagauri who lived like a cultivator He was

also patronised by Sultan Ghiya Sud Din Khalji He use to impart spiritual education and write commentary on the Holy Quaran He compiled treatises on Sufism also

KHWAJA ZIYA NAKHSHABI

Another famous sufi saint of equal merit and fame was Khwaja Ziya Nakhshabi, a disciple of Shaikh Farid, who settled at Nagaur sometime during the Mongol invasion He was a scholar par excellence and a verstile writer and composer of Sufi poetry of high order His Silkus Suluk (string of Sufism) describes the basic principles of the Sufi movement in as many as 151 chapters He considered the sufis as a people who were excellent both inwordly and outwordly It is interesting to mention here that Nakhshabi is mainly remembered for his work *Tuti Nama* (Stories from a Parrot) a Persian version of the Sanskrit work entitled *Suka Saptati* by Chintamani Bhatt The tales were mostly derived from famous Classics *Panchatantra* and *Hitopadesh*

Although Nakhshabi breathed his last in 1350-51 A D yet his poetry has helped to perpetuate his memory as a great saint and writer

SPIRITUAL CULTURE OF SAINTS

It is interesting to note that there is a remarkable similarity between the common practices beliefs and observances related to the saint siddha devotee tradition Almost all the saints by and large underline the importance of the welfare of the people *(Parmartha)* truth *(Satya)* and accumulation of religious merit *(Dharma Sanchaya)* as the primary aim of life The Bhakti culture throws ample light on the contemporary ethical and religio spiritual life The creative genius of the saints lies in their multi-dimensional and synthetic views The old Indian tradition of freedom of expression finds symbolic expression in this age The saints emphasized on personal experiences and *Sadhana* and believed that one should become one s own lamp for the acquisition of knowledge They time and again preach that one should maintain harmony between one s theoretical and practical lives

BASIC TENETS

There are certain fundamental observances commonly practised by the Bhaktas and saints such as repetition of name (nam jap) remembering the name (*Namsmarana*) listening and reciting the *lila* of God importance of *guru* and certain element of mysticism We have traces of a rich tradition of *nam jap* (repetion of the name) in India prior to its adoption by the saint poets

Traditionally it is believed that God realisation is possible through knowledge action *bhakti* and yoga The saints have precisely given the appelation *Surat* to the act of repeating the name Kabir has highlighted the significance of *nam jap* by saying that one has to go far away hence proceed immediately as there is no resting place here no friend no money no rest one has to travel alone and has to swim this inhospitable sea by chanting the

name of *Hari* The importance of *nam jap* in the saint tradition can hardly be overemphasized In the higher stage of *Sadhana* the difference between the *Bhakti* and the *Bhagwan* disappears completely *Infact the nam is both the end as well as the means* Dadu like Kabir is also under the intoxication of *nam* and he is overwhelmed after having consumed the nector underlying the *nam jap* According to him the body is the cage and soul within the parrot and one becomes wise by *reciting the name of the God* Another saint poet Haridas Niranjani has also stressed the significance of *nam jap*

GURU TRADITION

Guru tradition is very old in India It had always renewed itself with the emergence of religio philsophical sects and sub sects The evolution of Vaishnavism Shaivism Shaktism and Tantricism also did not prove detrimental in any way to the growth of the *guru* tradition The incessant stream of the tradition of devotion to *guru (guru bhakti)* from the Vedic age kept on flowing through out in the following period with increased vigour and was further enriched under the medieval bhakti movement The importance of the preceptor in our period of study is so much that no spiritual progress was conceivable with out the able guidance of the *guru* Infact Gorakhnath s ideas about *guru* by and *large represent the viewpoint of other Saints* like Mira Dadu etc According to Gorakhnath the blind well in the sky is filled with nector and a person having a *guru* can enjoy the drink of the well but a man without a *guru* will remain thirsty Certain saints like Charandas *and his female desciple* Sahjobai have given preference to *guru* (preceptor) over the God

The ultimate aim of the saints was fusion with the absolute reality (God) through realization of the self The whole matter is a subject of self realization which essentially needs the physical presence and active guidance of the preceptor Even in normal process of acquiring knowledge we require the assistance of a *guru* but in spiritual matters the importance of the preceptor could hardly be overemphasized The saints on the one hand stress the need of a *guru* in persuit of higher knowledge or self

realization and on the other hand they warn the followers against pseudo—*gurus*

MYSTICISM

The entire saint bhakta tradition is wrapped up in some kind of mysticism The saints in general believed in the impermanence of material world and human beings But they also give sufficient importanee to human beings in so far as they are regarded as manifestations of God Himself They have been conceived as Separated beings living in this world in the state of '*Viyoga* that is separation from the Higher Being (God) They therefore per ceive human beings as mini representations of the Almighty They believed that by serving the humanity they were serving the God Himself Thus the service of humanity will bring the devotee into direct contact with the God which automatically would result in the fusion of the soul with the God This precisely is the ultimate aim of human life The saints have tried to explain the fusion with the help of imageries similies and metaphors for example Dadu termed it as drinking of nector of *Ramras* Haridas Niran jani and Meera have also explained it in their own way Charandas calls it as *Surati* This state according to the saints is the state where there is no darkness of ignorance no duality no fear no illusion etc and the human heart enjoys the freedom from bondage of wordly acquisitions This state of self realization according to saints is comparable to the merger of lower soul into the higher soul the state of highest bliss

YOGIC IDEAS

Kabir may be regarded as a link between the Nath tradition and the saint tradition The true representative of the saint tradi tion was undoubtedly Dadu who introduced certain new aspects in the sphere of Yogic practices in accordance with the need of the time Dadu was well versed in the yogic tradition besides being a devotee who had faith in self realization His *Sadhna* may be regarded as *laya yoga* which is distinctly different than *jnana yoga* of Kabir According to Dadu if a devotee takes refuge in the God after having completely discarded all kinds of ills vices prejudices and inhibitions he fully merges into the ultimate reality This is fusion of the individual self with the higher self This is

precisely the meaning of *laya yoga* Dadu is said to have written several books on different aspects of yogic practices using his nick name Kummari Pav He has given an exhaustive list of the famous Sadhakas from Narada to Gorakhnath in one of the chapters of his Banis Dadu has laid emphasis of meditation (Dhyana) and regulation of breath (Pranayama) for attaining highest bliss (Surati) He certainly seems to have very good knowledge of the *yoga sastra* as would appear from the frequent *use of words pertaining to yoga* and *yogic practices He further* maintains that the renunciation should be complete from within for it is through this inner *Sadhana* alone that one can realize one s higher aim

Saint Ram Charan wrote *Sabda Prakash* which explains various aspects of *yoga sadhana* methods Following the precept of Rama Charan the followers of the Ramsnehi sect stress the need to practice the Sabda *yoga sadhana* (muttering—the name of the God) for God realization Charandas the founder of the Charandasi sect is said to have learnt the *yoga sastra* from Shukdev He practised yoga for fourteen years and afterwards wrote several useful treatises on various aspects of *yoga* Thus Charandas brings about a remarkable synthesis of *yoga, bhakti* and *brahma jnana* which is evident from his book Bhaktisagar This book is considered as an authentic text on various aspects of yoga and yogic practices

Mira is another subtle mystic saint poetess who subscribed the idea that one can realize the God through immortal love She like her contemporary fellow saints was acquainted with yogic observances Other saints like Haridas Niranjani Jambhoji Jasnathji Rajjab Sundardas Chhote Dariyaoji etc are also influenced by the yogic philosophy and observances of the contem porary times

SAHAJAVASTHA (NATURAL STATE)

According to saints the ultimate aim of saintly life is to reach *Sahajavastha* through discipline, devotion and *dhyana* The indivi dual self and the *Brahman* are inseparable The fusion of self with the *Brahman* is the natural state of *Jiva* (self) Knowledge meditation chanting of the name of God yoga *Samadhi* etc are not possible without being in one s natural state *(Sahajavastha)* One has to rid himself off from fix and duality in order to reach

Sahajavastha Almost all the saints have emphasized the need to reach the natural state for God realization The man will automatically become free from superstitions external rites rituals and other infatuations of the material world when he reaches the natural state To sum up the main features of *Sahajavastha* would include virtues such as *Abheda Anabhaya Nirvairta, Samatva, Satsanga, Sevabhav* and *Eklayata*

ELEMENT OF MIRACLE

The association of miracle with the prophets and founders of new faiths and such other godmen is more or less an essential feature of the system Broadly speaking a number of miracles are woven around the saints or prophets in such a manner that their person assumes a distinct character The miracles serve the purpose in two ways namely by giving a distinct identity to the saint or a prophet and arousing the element of faith among the believers

It is interesting to note that during the early medieval age the emergence of Tantricism and its subsequent popularity among the various contemporary sects paved the way for the recognition of the miracles The *siddhas* and *Nath yogis* popularised the use of miracles to influence the common believers The impact of miracle making was so overwhelming during the middle ages that people seldom took saints seriously unless they gave evidence of their capacity to miracle making The saints of Rajasthan like Pipa Dadu Haridas Niranjani Laldas Mira etc were no exception to the general practice They are also said to have demonstrated numerous miracles while living to impress upon their followers It is strange to mention that these saints personally decried the use of miracles being illogical and irrational They were against any kind of superstitions and blind faith However their followers do ascribe to them several miracles

CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF THE SPIRITUAL CULTURE

The middle ages in India represent the transitional phase of our history and culture It posed new challenges to our social political economic religious and cultural life The ancient traditions especially social order and religious practices were questioned by the competent authorities being out dated The custodians of society and religion and also the authors having reformist inclination had already started the process of change and

transformation in accordance with the need of the time The classical tradition was declining and *Kali* tradition was gradually replacing it The sudden advent of Islamic culture further complicated the sitution It posed several new questions and created new problems In the begining the great Indian tradition of assimilation and synthesis became somewhat defensive But with the passage of time the glory was revived The credit for this revival of synthesis and assimilation can rightly be given to the saints and saint poets of the Bhakti movement The Sufis also played a significant role in this direction They stood by the saints in working for the social transformation communal harmony and religious synthesis The sufis and saints were great believers of humanism They displayed equal concern for the God and man

To us it appears that the Bhakti movement of India represents the epoch of spiritual democracy The saints and devotees pleaded for the equality of man irrespective of caste creed etc They emphasized the freedom of thought and belief leading to freedom from bondage of life Their concern for human being and commitment for their emancipation was deep rooted It may be mentioned here that they sprouted from the lower stratum of society they lived like ordinary people and worked and served them with all their strength This precisely will account for their popularity among the masses

An important contribution of these saints was certainly the use of commonly used dilects of the people for their discourses and writings It naturally brought them in close affinity of the common people The impact of their teachings on the masses was bound to be stable as it was based on their personal experiences and practises The Saints presented a very high profile of their personality as a consequence of which they were deified during their own lifetime The folk deities of Rajasthan are the best illustrations of this trend

CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE SAINTS

The saints and the great men *(mahapurusha)* are supposed to possess and acquire certain distinctive qualities which give them respectability and following among the masses The Vaishnav sect appear to have taken a lead in maintaining the saintly tradition since the begining in so far as it frequently enumerates the basic features of a saint There are three yardsticks commonly used for

the measurement of sainty qualities They are spiritual attainment religious observance and following prescribed moral code of conduct It may be pointed out here that so far as spiritual attainment is concerned it was highly a p rsonal matter confined to the saint himself The religious practices of the saints were objects of of immitation for the |people As regards the moral code it definately helped in building the character of the people These saints by and large kept themselves disengaged from the subtlities of spiritual life They never bothered their heads by asking unto themselves what and how a man should do for self realization They merely taught people how to live a simple honest and unadultered life Truth speaking righteous conduct and befriending the people by showing love and affection towards all living creatures were some other precepts of these saints

It is interesting to note that the saints ware living by and large a normal wordly life performing their household duties as members of family and carrying on their normal occupation but certainly with marked distinction To live a highly disciplined life by observing penance and controlling one s senses while living in a family is far more difficult a task then renouncing the world and observing the penance in sylvan solitudes The saints of medieval Rajasthan in particular had distinctly maintained the high tradition of saintly life and ideals They in brief were endowed with the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong good and bad virtues and vices *Sreyas* and *Preyas* etc

The ideals of the saints may be summoned up in their concept of *niskamata abheda drishti Jala mein Kamalwat Vyavahar* and humanism The main aim of the saints was to create a world free from vices like greed avarice intolerance violence selfishness and indulgence They wanted to develop a society absolutely based on truth non violence love piety and equality among the human beings Their teachings had bearings on social welfare communal harmony and immotional integration These saints have precisely done commendable job in promoting the above mentioned social and human values It is important to emphasize here that their teachings were relevant in their own periods and are much more relevant to our present day world when we are facing great crisis It may be pointed out here that given serious thought the teachings of the great saints are if adhered to

capable Of bringing about social harmony and sectarian tolerance in our society

The methodology adopted by the saints for social reforms and communal harmony bare rich fruits as would appear from the large following they commanded even during their life time Thus the practicability of their ideals could hardly be over emphasized The saints indeed were the embodiment of synthesis The synthesis they tried to bring forth was between the *nishkamata* and wordly behaviour renunciation and family life and ideal and practice

One of several other important contributions of these saints was the formulation of standards of human behaviour according to the needs of the time They time and again emphasized the equality of men and identity of man with God In order to realize their goal they opposed all types of social conduct and sectarian philosophies that were in one or the other way against their basic ideal

The saints were against any kind of prejudice in relation to religious beliefs They frequently taught their disciples to be free from prejudices and dogmatic approach According to them everyone should freely think about and choose his faith that appeals him and not merely follo ving it in a blind manner without having conviction In this respect the saints were following the ideal of Buddha s teachings

The saints were strongly opposed to the useless external rites rituals and superstitions They have compared the irrational belief with the dust spread over the mirror, that is Reality The real identity of the mirror remains hidden so long as the dust over it is not removed The removal of the dust is not possible unless one discards one s prejudices and predetermined ideas The realization of truth and the merger of individual soul with the higher soul will remain a distant dream according to them till one decides to approach the Reality with a free mind after having removed the dust from over the mirror

Another important contribution of these saints was perhaps in the sphere of spirituality They tried to popularise the spiritual life among the cross section of society They thus freed the spirituality from the clutches of elites of society and made it possible for the comman man to practise it without any hindrance This was one of the several factors responsible for their popularity

among the masses They had opened the doors of spirituality to one and all without any restrictions of caste creed and sex The simplified procedure for establishing communion with God had further added attraction to their fold They never forced their followers to strictly observe the rules of penance meditation etc They instead recommend the *nam jap* to their followers for self realization

The saints were social reformers par-excellence They tried to create an awareness among the masses against the ills of contemporary society by openly condemning and critisizing the irrational social customs and religious observances They were undoubtedly great catalysts The society was on the verge of breaking for want of understanding and tolerance They brought about much needed unity and intergration and gave new lease of life to the declining society

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

The salient underlying features of India s culture has been unity in diversity It has given enough strength to sustain our culture through political racial and cultural changes The medieval age in Indian history is marked by successful political and cultural inroads of the followers of Islam The establishment of Islamic state in India changed the very fabric of social and religious organisation The alien culture of Islam posed new problems and challenges The basic elements of it were not in consonance with the traditional Indian culture The initial reaction of the people was that of defensive resistence But ultimately the process of assimilation and adoptation started and grand synthesis was achieved The saints devotional poets sufis and folk deities (such as Ramdevji) may be regarded as harbingers of this message of social harmony and religious tolerance They could understand the need of the time and accordingly respond to it by showing the seeds of mutual trust understanding and cordaility Another important feature of these saints was perhaps their deliberate indifference towards the weaker points of other prevailing sects They were certainly more interested in approaching the reality squirely and did not bother to engage their attention in finding faults with other systems They were of firm conviction that all paths lead to the ultimate The means may very but the end is the same The saints basically believed in the

essential unity of all religions That is why they underlined the importance of the concept of *abhed drishti* (making no distinction between human beings) Their philosophical ideals greatly helped in the realization of their cherished objective of social and religious synthesis

At the end it may be pointed out here that the saints of Rajasthan in particular and saints of other regions of India in general contributed to the attainment of the high ideal of cultural synthesis This precisely has been one of the fundamental features of Indian culture and a contributory factor for the sustenance of our glorious civilization

COMPOSIT CULTURE OF RAJASTHAN

Rajasthan may be regarded as suitable area for the development of composit culture based on synthesis The geographical position of Rajasthan immensely contributed for the growth of a syncretic culture with dominant regional features The social and religious fabrick of this area remained almost unaffected by the social and religious pattern of the Gangetic basin in several ways The rigidity and conservative outlook of the people of Gangetic region is not conspicuous in Rajasthan in general The religious practices associated with the main sects of Hinduism could not engage the attention of the people of Rajasthan as it did in other parts of India The local folk deities saints and sufis influenced the common people of Rajasthan much more than the main deities of Hinduism

Rajasthan in general and western Rajasthan in particular is known for promoting the evolution and popularization of the mixed or composite culture Here the sufi saints and Hindu saints joined each other in the act of social and cultural assimilation The teachings of these saints and sufis underlined the importance of liberal and catholic outlook towards religious views and social systems of each other They time and again emphasized the futility of religious fanaticism narrow vision intolerance and conservatism In their discourses they exhorted the people to replace their animus with love conflict with compromise violence with peace revenge witn forgiveness and intolerance with fortitude

The assimilative and synthetic attitude of the people of Rajasthan is evident from their reverence to the folk deities like Ramdevji and saints like Laldas The Hindus in general belonging

to all sections of society worship Ramdevji as an incarnation of God Krishna and the Muslims venerate him as a *pir* Similarly Laldas though a Muslim by birth is adorned by Hindus

PROMOTION OF IMMOTIONAL INTEGRATION

The medieval Rajasthan like northern India witnessed the social political and religious crisis due to irrational and conservative outlook of the decision making persons in these spheres The caste system feudalism and political subjugation of Indian people by the followers of Islam further complicated the situation The advent of Islam posed new challenges to our social and religious fabric Initially the custodians of Hindu society reacted to the new situation in such a manner that the prevailing rules and norms of social system were redefined so as to make them more rigid and complex The position of women and lower classes became miserable as a consequence of the changed attitude The ignorance and poverty worsened the possibility of emancipation The social hierarchy with absured notions associated with various classes caused new tensions and conflicts then ever before

The priests were busy in acquiring supernatural powers the agents of political power were preoccupied with strange and self conceived notions of chivalry the business class was engaged in minting money and the so called upper classes were more interested in the imposition of their false superiority The victim of this painful man made situation was the helpless common man He was an objects of derision for all the higher classes They were made to understand that their miserable condition is nothing but the consequence of their actions and deeds of past life 'they should therefore accept it as their destiny

The appearance of the saints on the scene may well be regarded as a positive sign of change and improvement in the situation The common man took a sigh of relief Their hopes and aspirations were awakened Who could better understand the agony of the common man and who could raise their voice for improvement then the saints who themselves belonged to the same fraternity

The saints in order to redeem the helpless masses from their miserable socio religious status took recourse to following methods Firstly they advocated the philosophy of *abheda* (non distinction) in social and religious spheres Secondly they in close persuation

of the *abheda drsti* emphasized the need to have liberal outlook and tolerant attitude towards the view points of other The thrust of their teachings on religious tolerance communal harmony and cross cultural interaction created an atmosphere of under standing and adjustment

As the observance of traditional religious customs and rites based on the *Sastras*, was neither possible nor feasible for the common man the saints therefore suggested the people to replace them with the simplest possible religious observances That is why they steessed the importance of chanting the name instead of wasting one s time and energy on pilgrimage visiting *temples* keeping fast holy dips in the Ganges and other rivers

It may be pointed out here that the saints did not denounce the traditional religious belif out of any ill will or reaction to it but they presented a more rational and logical alternative suitable to the prevailing condition of the people Their philosophy and method had mass appeal An important attraction of the fold was perphaps the common man s language used by the saints for their discourses They lived like ordinary poor mortals they wore common dress ate common food and earned their livelihood like them Also most of them led domestic life and experienced its pangs and pains like ordinary people They lived strictly in accordance with their teachings and thus presented an ideal worth immitating for their followers Their living style itself conveyed their message

For them there was practically no difference between 'Ram and Rahim as the followers of both had the same end The basic difference between the two was of ways and means and not of the end Similarly they forcefully denounced the futility of caste and class feeling of high and low status, untouchability inferiority of women folk and downtrodden In their opinion all were created by God who does not believe in stratification and differentiation

Obviously the teachings of these saints considerably reduced socio religious conflict and tensions and brought about peace and harmony in society Thus their contribution in creating a congenial atmosphere in Rajasthan for the growth of a composite culture could hardly be overemphasized. This naturally paved the way for immotional integration

The contemporary socio religious condition in the medieval Rajasthan broadly speaking was complex The ideals regarding the social conduct and religious norms were not in consonance with their actual observance and execution The saints tried to bring about a change in the prevailing socio-religious situation through the following steps

EMPHASIS ON *SAHAJA SADHANA*

The saints at the initial stage discarded the age old practices and observances and simplified the entire procedure so as to make it easy for one and all to work for spiritual progress The futility of icon worship pilgrimage *Sodasopchar* etc was frequently emphasized by these saints because in course of time these means were made to assume the status of the end itself by the people and consequently the real aim was thrown into the oblivion

To us it seems that people were attracted toward inverted *Sadhana* (*Antarmukhi Sadhana* such as *Namasmarana)* for obvious reasons The common man could not afford the expenses involved in the *Bahir Sadhana* (worshipping the deity with costly rituals pilgrimage etc) Further a large section of society belong ing to the lower stratum were forbidden from paying obeisance to the icons and images in the temples The saints also criticized the hypocritic observances such as use of exclusive dress appli cation of sandal wood paste on forehead violence involved in the rituals and age old irrational restrictions prohibitions and totems and taboos The God according to them was omnipresent where was the need to search him elsewhere when He is very much present in one s own heart It is therefore not very difficult according to the saints to locate Him with complete dedication and devotion Thus what was required of a devotee was not to get engaged in external futile and illogical observances but to recite his name with utmost sincerety and devotion after having taken complete refuge in Him

EMPHASIS ON ETHICAL AND MORAL VALUES

The emergence of Tantricism and its gradual impact on almost all religious sects of the contemporary medieval India created a situation marked by general moral and ethical decadence The traditional values morals and ethics were all challenged by the Trantric practices The advent of Islam in India further added to the already complicated situation The people in general were

confronted with a peculiar situation where old system was trans formed to a great extent The religious superstitions and rites and observances externally associated with the respective religions and sects were being overemphasized by the orthodox priests The masses were not in a position to choose the path to the followed by them

The Bhakti movement in general and saints associated with the movement in Rajasthan in particular created a situation where by people could feel a real good religious alternative in terms of the teachings of the saints in the prevailing circumstances The saints underlined the importance of self realization no doubt but they also clearly advocated the significance of justness of means According to them an aspirant of self realization should strictly live and behave in accordance with the moral code prescribed by the saints for the purpose They generally discarded the externally associated rites in pursuance of the high goal and emphasized the significance of inner purity sincerety devotion and complete surrender to the spiritual *guru*

The saints prescribed a specific list of do s and dont s for the guidance of a devotee aspiring for the spiritual progress The preachings and the associated moral code of conduct prescribed by saints like Jambhoji Jasnathji Dadu Haridas Laldas Charan das and Ram Charan are by and large similar with minor changes in emphasis here and there on certain points Good conduct contentment purity self discipline truth speaking non violence compassion forgiveness non enemity feeling of equality service to others, humbleness (benignity) sacrifice simplicity etc constituted the list of do s prescribed for the guidance of the people

The list of dont s for the guidance of the devotees included attachment greed passion anger falsehood violence stealing, reproaching conceit avarice animus gelousy misconduct abdu rateness eating prohibited food use of intoxicants etc

As already pointed out earlier the saints have time and again emphasized the importance of character building for spiritual progress According to them this was simply inconceivable without the constant supervision and guidance of a *guru* and also without *satsanga*

The *satsanga* or company of righteous people promotes a sense of equality and fraternity among the people on the one hand and it removes all the dirt of the people by helping them build their character on the other

THE MORAL AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

The constant preachings of the saints in Rajasthan have singularly contributed in the process of the eradiction of social evil and have generated an atmosphere which was most congenial and ideal for character building and moral uplift The cumulative effect of all this effort was the betterment of human life especially of the common man

The saints through their teachings helped in the process of raising the social dignity of the downtrodden and untouchable people The general condition of the women folk also received sufficient attention owing to their efforts The bad habit of using the intoxicants of the people was changed considerably At the end we would like to point out here the awareness and sincerity of the saints and folk deities of Rajasthan regarding the preservation of environment Some saints like Jambhoji were not only worried for the welfare of the human beings alone but were equally feeling concerned for the preservation of vegetation and animal life

An important redeeming feature of these saints that deserves mention here is the emphasis they gave to self reliance They firmly believed that mere chanting of the name of *Hari* for begging their food would be disgraceful living It was according to them essential for every aspirant of spiritual progress to earn his living while engaged in the path of progress

SUITABLE INTERPRETATION OF SOCIAL ORDER

The prevailing social hierarchies and stratification were given new orientation The saints emphasized on the classless and caste less society They strongly condemned the fragmentations in society based on caste They were of the firm opinion that all kinds of distinctions were man made which create social tension violence and oppression The God according to them treats all human beings equally as all beings are His creations Thus they stressed on the basic unity of human beings The central theme of their social thinking was bassed on humanism and their only concern was well being of the mankind The saints were detached from the material world though they lived in society like ordinary

mortals That is precisely the reason for their being concerned for the transformation of society

They also played the role of social reformers Infact these saints were more worried about socially and educationally backword people such as untouchables orphans tribals downtrodden and women folk The people belonging to these classes were mostly engaged in trades and professions involving violence on the one hand and use of intoxicants on the other The sermons of the saints carried the message for these backward communities and consequently their bad habits such as quarreling killing for sport and use of narcotics were reduced to a large extent and there was some improvement in the general atmosphere in the society

It may be pointed out here that the different orders established by saints like Jambhoji Jasnathji, Haridas Niranjani Laldas Dadu Ramcharan should neither be misconstrued as mere extension of the old sects nor just replacements As the older sects by and large had some reservations with regard to social hierarchy But the saints of Rajasthan had practically no reservations regarding classes based on caste and economic condition

THE CULTURAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE SAINTS OF RAJASTHAN

The medieval Rajasthan is marked for its incessant wars between the small states The people enjoyed the heroic tales of petty chiefs in the interstate feuds The chivalry and heroism displayed in the sanguinary wars was the chosen theme of the poets The sense of pride and glory could even beguile the rational mind of pioneer historians of Rajasthan like Col James Tod The so called history of medieval war fare and inter state feuds still continues to haunt *the mind of the historians of* Rajasthan history The chivalry and feudal structure continues to receive more than its due attention in so far as the real cultural face of medieval Rajasthan is completely veiled The modern historains who have been engaged in writing on the history and culture of Rajasthan have hardly been attracted by the rich and *fascinating aspects of the glorious heritage of* Rajasthan

The present monograph is an attempt to outline briefly the spiritual culture of medieval Rajasthan The significance of the spiritual heritage could hardly be overlooked As the so called values and virtues of medieval society emphasizing the pride and

chilvalry have become redundant in the present day context the importance of the accomplishments of th- saints of Rajasthan therefore requires sufficient attention It is strange to note that so far the scholarly attention of the historians could not tap the enormous resources available for the reconstruction of the cultural history of Rajasthan The spiritual heritage of Rajasthan is a subject that needs extensive study for obvious reasons Firstly it is this aspect of the society that will give us the real picture of the pains and pleasures of the common p ople for whose amelioration and betterment these saints did contribute a lot through their sermons and discourses Secondly the saints and their social and spiritual philosophy reflects the continuity of the glorious cultural tradition of India of adoptability assimilation and synthesis Thirdly the history and culture of Rajasthan essentially represents two different patterns of life—material and spiritual The material aspect is highlighted in the accounts preserved ir the Dingal tradi tion These accounts are full of references to feuds struggles and wars for the acquisition of wealth and expansion of territorial boundaries The spiritual tradition is represented by the saints who exhorted the age old social and religious values such as tole rance non violence equality universal brotherhood sacrifice compassion etc

DEVELOPMENT OF LITERATURE

The saints used the vernacular language for conveying their message through poetry This naturally let to the growth of language and literature They have enriched the vernacular language by adding the words borrowed from Persian Rekhta (Urdu) and other regional languages and dilects such as Panjabi Sindhi Gujarati Hindi etc The mixed language thus evolved is called *Sadhukkadi*

The saints were not much concerned about the appropriate use of the metre in the poetic compositions They have made use of the traditional metrics as far as they were known to them But in course of their compositions they have invented metres more suited for their *Bani Sakhi Sabad Ramaini* etc They have frequently used *Doha* metre

The saints like Mira and Nagaridas have composed *Pada* and *Kavitta* based on musical notations Saints like Nagaridas had written about seventy books on different aspects of literature One

of his books named *Iska chaman* is full of Sufi elements although he was devotee of *Pushti* tradition of Vallabha This shows his broadmindness

DEVELOPMENT OF MUSIC

The compositions of saints were based on musical notations i e, Raga and Raginis The musical instruments were frequently used while singing the devotional songs The poetical compositions of the famous saint poetess Mira for example, are completely based on *Ragas and Raginis* such as *Asavari Ramkali Bilaval Sarang, Bhairav* etc Similarly the compositions of Haridas were based on as many as twenty *ragas* Another saint poet Nagaridas was a great musician himself He is said to have invented several new *Ragas* beside making use of several prevailing *Ragas* and *Raginis* for his poetic compositions. One of his typical musical compositions is known as *Sawant Sarang Raga* The folk tradition of *Raga* used by the saints in their compositions is *Raga Sorath*

GROWTH OF ART

The saints of Rajasthan are to be broadly divided into two main sections The *Sagunopasak* and *Nirgunopasak* Mention may be made here of the fact that the saints in general have contributed toward the growth of language literature and music in Rajasthan however, the development of art is the exclusive domain of saints belonging to the *Sagunopasak* fold The Vaishnavite sects of Vallabha and Nimbark were primarily responsible for the construction of temples and images in Rajasthan Their contribution for the enrichment of temple architecture and sculpture cannot be overlooked Mention may be made of the grand temples of Srinathji in Nathdwara Dwarkadheesh temple in Kankroli, Mathuradheesh temple in Kota and Govinddev temple in Jaipur These temples are adorned by the beautiful icons of respective deities. The icons are highly imposing and exquisitely carved out.

The history of the contribution of the Vaishnava sects of Vallabh and Nimbark to the enrichment of the culture of Rajasthan will remain incomplete without the mention of the distinct contribution made by them in the sphere of painting It may be pointed out here that the painting is primarily the result of wielding the brush alongwith management of colour We cannot determine the nomenclature of the painting on the basis of religion and community Infact painter may belong to any community

him only the subject colour brush and imagination is important Therefore the painting of Rajasthan had its own characteristic features of course with the dominance of themes not only from Hindu mythology but also from the court life and life of the common people

In the process of evolution of paintings of Rajasthan the Jain miniature paintings of illustrated manuscripts of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries may be taken as paintings of early phase This followed by the development of the Kalpasutra paintings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries By the end of sixteenth century the Marwar and the Mewar styles of painting emerged as independent painting schools

With gradual adoption of Mughal technique the classical paintings lost its pre-eminance and became more sophisticated and individualistic In the seventeenth century painters began executing the illustrated copies of the Bhagavata Purana Ramayana etc in the manner in which Rajasthani and Mughal features became blended together The subjects of its inspiration were poetry drama music etc The common man of Mewari school of painting is the representative of emotional intensity and simplicity Only simple colours have been used in these painta ings The paintings usually maintained the characteristic features of Mewar art and depicted the contemporary customs and manners Similarly the Marwar school also presents a comprehensive picture of every walk of life The use of yellow colour is predominant in the paintaings of this school The Bikaner school adopted some of its basic features from Marwar School They used both Marwar and Mughal techniques and painted hunting scenes harem life and scenes from Epics and Puranas Bundi school of painting had close affinity with Mewar Use of yellow and red colours are noteworthy feature of these paintings The painters of Bundi school were inspired by natural environment and exerted enough influence on the art styles of neighbouring states

From the angle of charm beauty and perfection of expression the paintings of Kishangarh school are second to none Great master artists like Sawant Singh (Nagaridas) and Nihalchand immortalised the art and technique of paintings of Kishangarh Nagaridas was not only patron of art but also himself an expert artist The famous paintings of *Bani Thani* and *Radha* are

supposed to be excellent examples of the art of brush and colour *Shuknasika* (raised nose of extraordinary length) and *Khanjan nayan* (elongated eyes) are the main features of the paintings of women style We find a synthesis of art love and devotion in the paintings of Kishangarh school Comparatively the Jaipur and Alwar School show greater impact of the Mughal style

The Nathdwara school of paintings form a class in itself It represents the diversity of techniques but unity of execution The painters belonging to various locations followed the same theme of manifestation of Sri Nathji with other themes of their original place This school of painting is primarily devoted to Lord Krishna, the depiction of His life and *Lila* dominated as subject matter and themes of the paintings of Nathdwara

IMPACT ON CULTURAL ORGANISATION

The sphere of influence of the saints and folk deities had several dimensions They are certainly reeponsible for the organisation of events like sectarian congregation cultural gatherings fairs and festivals throughout the length and breadth of Rajasthan The origin and evolution of these fairs and festivals is often shrouded in mystery Notwithstanding this the fact remains that these cultural activities have certainly served the purpose of the saints They have undoubtedly proved to be powerful agents working effectively for the social transformation and emotional integration between the cross sections of society Besides providing all participants an opportunity to enjoy the bliss of the relaxed mind far away from the regular strains and stresses of daily life and living The sacred spots serve as perennial sources of inspiration affording supreme peace and consolation to the care worm heart of the people

These fairs and festivals also give the people ample opportunity to mix up freely and exchange their views regarding social customs beliefs etc An important aspect of these fairs is the emergence of the place associated with them, as a centre of great commercial activity, providing the people a place to exhibit their products for sale and purchase The urban people may treat the spot as a centre for enjoyment whereas for the rural people it is more or less a necessary medium for the management of household requirements both—monetarly and materially The fairs also serve the purpose of rural trade market especially for the sale and

gist of true secularism According to it the spirit of secularism can not be thrust upon any religious philosophy by superior external factors but has to be inculcated within the framework of the religious beliefs so as to form a uniformly fabricated pattern with no traces of superimposition This concept requires people to abstain from prejudiced opposition of any particular socio religious organisation and ideology and to refrain from futile criticism of facts and practices related to different sects The theology and doctrines of different sects and cults can be visualised as different petals of a lotus emanating from the same centre The fabric of this country is essentially secular in character if unspoilt by extraneous influences owing to the cardinal tenet of the saints that one divine existence pervades all and that links and filiations join all forms of life past and present This allows everyone to conceive his own interpretation of God (who is considered attributeless) without inviting wrath of fellow beings and being ridiculed

According to saints a true devotee is not that who is a staunch follower of a particular sect and challenges the virtuosity of others but one who dedicates his life to the cause of humanity and places *his faith only in the cream of humanitarian behaviour acquired* either in the form of knowledge inherited from *Guru* or in the form of self experience If all the person associated with different sects could adhere to these high ideals of behaviour there would be no scope for mutual hatred among the people in general and commu *nalism would automatically be written off*

Every religion has two aspects viz *Shruti* and *Smriti* The origin of all religions lies in the *Shruti* form and represents the spirit of unision with invisible and intangible reality The mutual differences of all religions become defined in the stage of *Smriti which deals primarily with the rites rituals performances practices* and observances to attain the basic goals set by the *Shruti* form Thus while *Shruti* is the cohesive force between the various reli gions *Smriti* appears to be the dispersive one On the basis of research and study of the various faiths prevalent at the times and subsequent the saints were able to *grasp the Shruti form of* the religions after deep thought and contemplation Consequently they were able to discern the *Smriti* form and shun it at least partially so that the harmonious *Shruti* form underlying the overall structure could be highlighted and all religions can clearly

be appreciated as varied paths leading to the same goal Here it would be apt to point out that the target generally set to the humanity by the saints was self realization *(Atma Jnana)* leading to *Moksha* and not the attainment of worldly or esoteric benefits like *Siddhi* and *Svarga* The saints emphasised the need for introvert *Sadhana* viz *Nam smaran* in its simplest form They never encouraged extrovert, pompous ceremonies as these differentiate the religions and inter religious sects Once devoid of superimposed decorations the core of universal *Dharma* becomes apparent in all forms of religions and the possibility of integration of all of these in to one *Vishwa Dharma* becomes a probability

The first and foremost responsibility of political authority in a country today is the maintenance of peace and order This essentially requires the eradication of communalism The roots of communalism can, invariably be traced to the entangled mass of conflicts and contradictions among religious faiths and ideologies which have percolated to the day through a history of mutual wrongs and violences It is not upto a government to wipe these out from the states of communities At the most, it can prevent the commitment of new wrongs but the atonement of old ones holds the key to the lock of peace This is here that the role of saints philosophers thinkers and intelligentia, in general cannot be over emphasised It is only their voices which can pervade the deaf ears of the communities and fill their minds with the bliss that would engulf all the other discordant notes of hatred and violence The everlasting elixir of their doctrines of fusion aud synthesis can not only turn the comman masses to stand face to face with realities but also usher in a novel era of mutual trust tolerance peaceful coexistance and inspiration which would lead to the overall development and upliftment of the society as a whole The theories and thoughts of saints can always be transcripted in the present contexts The need to do so is now more than ever The concept of Truth as *Param Dharma* may be visualised in the religion of spirit in the present contexts For the definition of this religion of spirit which alone can effectively circumvent the harms of communalism the theology of *Sant Parampara* has to be resorted to

VISHWA KALYAN (UNIVERSAL WELL-BEING)

On carrying out deep psychological and sociological researches it becomes increasingly clear that the presently popular theories

ideologies and social norms especially the materialistic and progress oriented approach of the west have their origin in the reality of class struggle and the survival of the fittest Under this the rise of one is inevitably based on the debris of fall of another Thus in order to be luminous one group uses the other lower order group as fuel This is akin to that law of animal kingdom which says *Jeevo Jeevasya Jeevanam* Consequently the zenith of agricultural and industrial revolutions of the western world gave birth to social economic and moral struggles Lured by the lucre of materialistic achievements people and nations thew all their efforts in following the suit without paying heed to the less conspicuous (at least at the time) moral and spiritual decline of the society As a result this new self centred value less culture started flourishing and expanding its field of influence pulling down the entire arema with its own decline This so called Modern Culture completely neglected the development of inherent and externally acquired virtues of various classes and focussed only on the advancements of material benefits of the self and those closely associated with the self

Automatically the concept of unity of the world became null and void The credit for all this downward trend goes to the extreme competition and mutual conficts The ill effects of this culture are now boldly outlined on the fabric of social behavioural pattern in their realms of influence

Obviously the aforesaid doctrines stand on the opposite end of the compass with reference to the thoughts and theories propounded by saints It is to be realised that the benefit of one lies in the benefit of community that of community in the benefit of society and that of society in the benefit of humanity as a whole Instead presently people believe in the individualistic aproaches which require a person to stand on another s shoulder for keeping his head above the rest Thus the efforts for the acquirement of material wealth and prosperity and the so called progress is not collective and leads to widespread envy jealousy gread friction and struggle which ultimately get interwoven within the human nature and society These tendencies further aggravate the crisis and darken the screen which separates the individual and collective benefits making it so opaque that it becomes impossible to see through The discontent intolerance and rivalry between persons

is later manifested at the community level and then at the inter national level Under these conditions the possibility of world peace is beyond imagination

Saints have considered this condition as a consequent of *Maya* and its allies If this could be done away with, or if a person could see beyond the images created by *Maya*, then only the concord between *Swartha* and *Parmartha* become apparant This is the distillate of their concept of *Nirvaira Dharma* They have concluded that the diversity which does not allow the concept of universal unity to materialise is based upon the dualism of I and You This not only creates a deep ravine between *Swartha* and *Parmartha*, but also prevents one from being alive to and compa ssionate towards the problems faced by another This illusion of separate existence results in the belief that one s own rise and fall is independent of that of others and people adopt seeking of self interest as the only goal of life This does not allow them to comperehend the harm inflicted by them on others during the process of working towards achievement of their target But, later when a person analyses his own actions objectively it is realised that the past endeavours have led neither to attainment of true peace and happiness nor would have refraining from them lead to any significant adversity or loss

On further contemplation it also becomes evident that by standing in the way of benefit of others a person wrongs not only the other but also his own soul as each soul is a fragment of the same supreme existence Thus finally the image of international unity remains not virtual but becomes real tangible and approachable Briefly speaking with a broad minded outlook the eternal truth pertaining to humanity is peaceful coexistence without nurturing any ill will against the achievements and endeavours of fellow beings This ideology frames the background of the self explanatory terminology of saints used in this context, viz, *Nirvairata Samdrishti Sambuddhi* and *Sarva Jana Hitaya* Together they form the attributes which characterise the *Vishwa Dharma* conceived by saints

This *Vishwa Dharma* has heen raised on the foundation of mutual trust as the basis of relations which are subjectively different from the only relationship of modern world i e the tirelaonship of competitors The most ironical fact about this

relationship is that even while distrusting the other a person expects that other to be instrumental in the achievements he is seeking This leads to rivalry and ingratitude, even if the sought achievements are gained and the chain continues perpetually Thus progress would come to a standstill if one considers every person beyond self as a competitor or rival On the contrary the truth is that success depends entirely upon the fact that people have to be understood and they in turn have to unerstand the conviction of the other look through his field of vision to see his goal and co operation has to be rendered mutually This is the gist of *Nirvairata*

The materialisation of *Vishwa Kalyan* the universal well being lies in the quest for unity in diversity and not the vice versa i e diversity in unity Thus people should realise the supreme being underlying the very existence of all and not concentrate upon the features which go into the construction of individuality from the substrate of generality

This ideology of saints has been accepted and adopted to suit the present context by Mahatma Gandhi This has proved their utility for modern world beyond doubt His experiments on Truth were inspired by and based on the doctrines inherited from the saints and were universally accepted as an alternative to the principle of competitiveness of this world where material prosperity is being visualised as the aim of life

THE CONTRIBUTION OF SAINTS TO THE CONSERVATION OF ENVIRONMENT

Through their discourses the medieval saints made concerted efforts to eradicate social evils prevent religious abuses and remove all kinds of discrimination from the society They worked for the development of a new social order where the society would be based on mutual goodwill understanding tolerance and respectful coexistence This is only one aspect of their multi dimensional approach towards the welfare of humanity Another aspect of this effort towards well being of common masses is depicted in their concern for the environment

It would be apt to mention here that the saints built up a superstructure on the foundation of the Vedic concept of preser vation of natural habitat This ideology of saints is relevant even in the present contexts The rules pertaining to the conservation

of environment framed by Jambhoji the propounder of the Bishnoi sect for his followers and the zeal with which the latter observed these rules deserve special mention Lead by the awareness of their leader towards the need of preservation of the ecolo gical balance the Bishnois have always been active for the protec tion and preservation of animal and plant life Their commitment towards the cause of protection of green trees can be gauged by the fact that on one occasion hundreds of Bishnois suffered atrocities and even laid down their lives in order to stall the indiscriminate felling planned by the administration Similarly, a number of other saints like Jasnathji Laldas Charandas Ramcharan etc, also framed rules for the protection of all species of life

As the environment has considerable impact on the living beings hence the spiritual leaders had been quite concious about the ways and means for the decrement of the level of pollution by removal of ingredients detrimental to the environmental equilibrium The oblation offered to folk deities through the sacrificial fire serve to purify the surrounding atmosphere These offerings usually consisted of ghee milk incense coconut betel nut etc

On the other hand it is notable that many of the folk deities had laid down their lives while protecting the bovine population This is an example of extreme sacrifice for the cause of flora and fauna Consequently people in the region cannot even think of committing violence against milch cattle and old and useless live stock is never sold to slaughterhouse Moreover many of the deities are supposed to be reincornated as serpants which often seek the hollows of trees or their roots as refuge from the scorching sun of *Marudhara* This serves a double purpose Not only the snake himself is assured of peaceful existence but the tree and the neigh bouring environs would not be disturbed

In the modern times the attention of the Government has been drawn time and again towards the importance of conservation of environment and maintenance of ecological balance by numerous activists of the field such as Jayadayal Goyandka (the founder of Geeta Press) Sundar Lal Bahuguna (of Chipko Andolan fame) and Baba Amte (the pioneer of the agitation against the construction of Narmada Sagar Dam) These persons have strived for and succeeded in creating an awareness regarding the subject among the common masses It can be easily envisaged that an attempt to alloy the ideas of saints and the vigorous efforts of modern environ mentalists would bringforth spectacular results

TERAPANTH

Jain tradition reckons twenty three Tirthankaras as having preceded Mahavira which takes Jainism back to fabulous antiquity The twenty third Prophet Parshva had organised a *Sangha* by bringing all his disciples under four categories viz monks nuns layman and laywomen With the passage of time corruption crept into the Order and Mahavira gave it fresh impetus by reforming it The followers of Parshva and Mahavira differed on some points which may be regarded as the basis for the evolution of Svetambara and Digambara sects Infact for a few centuries after Mahavira the history of Jainism is hardly more than the history of Jain Church It is worth mentioning that the Schisn did not stop with above early division of the communities Later on these two were further divided into *ganas kulas gachhas shakhas* and other sub sects The *gachchas* for example were divided into various groups and named after the province place caste founder peculiar religious rituals particular incidents etc It is quite interesting to note that most of the *gachhas* sprang up in Rajasthan and Gujrat where Jainism was popular Although most of them are now non existent yet some like *Kharatargachha* and *Tapagachha* are still continuing

The *gachhas* were known for their spiritual leadership and galaxy of erudite Acharyas They succeeded in popularising the doctrines of the *gachhas* Among the great Acharyas of Kharatara mention may be made of Jineshvara Suri and his disciple Jina vallabh Suri who chose Rajasthan as the sphere of their missionery activities They started reformist movement which was followed by able successors such as Jinadatta Suri Jinachandra Suri and Jinapati Suri

Probably in the ninth century the *Chaityavasin* tradition was established With the rise of this branch, one section was named

as *Vidhimargis* or *Suvihitamargis* The followers of this Order use to perform their religious duties at some profane place *Sthanaka* and not in a temple for they were against *Pratima* (idol) worship According to Mahapragya Lonka shah (1415 1489 A D) may be regarded as its originator He was succeeded by able Acharya like Rishi Lavaji Dharam Singh ji and Dharamdas Acharya Dharamdas renamed it as *Bavis Tola* or *Bavis Panth* Its members are called either *Dhundiyas* or *Dhundhakas* A counter part of the *Bavis Tola* is the Terapanth Jain sect conceived and founded by Bhikanji in 1760 A D

Bikshu (real name Bhikan) was born in 1726 A D at Kantalia in the Kantha region of the then princely state of Marwar He was son of Shah Baloojі and Dipanji who belonged to the Barsajan Bisa Oswal family of Saklecha *gotra* Right from childhood Bhikan evinced signs of brilliance and was known as *Jnani Guru* amongst his friends for his extra ordinary intelligence His parents were the followers of *Gachhavasi* sect But he was more impressed with Acharya Raghunathji of Dhundiya sect He was married to Suganibai Bhikanji shared the responsibility of looking after the ancestral business While leading a life of householder he came into active contact with *gachhavasi* sect and later with Potiaband sect and made an assessment of their thoughts and faiths He came into the contact of Acharya Raghunathji, the Pontiff of *Sthanakvasi* sect who persuaded his mother to allow Bhikanji to embrace asceticism Acharya Raghunathji himself initiated him into the Jain ascetic life in 1751 A D The Acharya blessed him 'may your fame spread far and wide in this world like this banyan tree under which you have been initiated At the time of initiation Bhikanji was less than twenty six years

Bhikanji was highly individualistic in his approach to religion He spent the first eight years of his monastic life in profound and critical study of the Jaina texts With utmost care and enthusiasm he studied *agmas* (Jain canonical texts) To his utter dismay he found that the Jain ascetics were not following the instructions of the *Agmas* and were lax in their behaviour

Despite his rational thinking he had firm faith in his preceptor As a true disciple he revered him He sometimes put searching questions of great wisdom to him Bhikanji s master (Raghunathji) either preferred not to answer or maintained discreet silence The

disciple s quest and the master s affectionate tolerance continued for almost seven years But this cordial relationship did not last longer Muni Bhikanji found that the votaries of Raghunathji were getting disillusioned gradually The Shravakas of Rajnagar had already begun to boycott the monks of his Order After prolonged agony of inner struggle Bhikanji decided to part company with his Guru

Once after a visit to Rajnagar when Bhikanji returned to Acharya Raghunathji and urged him to enjoin discipline on the monks the latter remained unmoved But Bhikanji was genuinely concerned about the negligent behaviour of the monks His aim was to reverse the course of degeneration When he found that the Acharya would not listen to him he severed his ties with him The day Bhikanji separated from Raghunathji s religious Order and set out to discover the true path his ordeal began

Bhikanji realized that he would have to struggle hard single handedly in order to rejuvenate the *jin marga* (path shown by Tirthankaras) Now he had twelve monks who had disowned Raghunathji along with him If he was also counted the total number of monks that constituted this group becomes thirteen He decided to reinitiate himself as a true Jaina monk Thus Ashadh Shukla Poornima 1760 A D was fixed for this memorable event Hereafter Bhikshu decided to preach people and rouse their awareness against laxity For this task initially he selected Jodhpur as the most suitable place Hence when he reached Jodhpur he decided not to stay at a *sthanak* because he had declared this act against the vow of *aparigraha* (non possession) In his search of a proper place to stay at he found some abondoned shops in the market of Jodhpur After getting the permission from their owner he stayed in one of these shops The place proved very advantageous because it was situated on the main road and the people used to gather there to hear him and discuss religious matters After staying at Jodhpur for some days when he moved towards Mewar he left behind thirteen committed *sravkas* One day the *sravkas* of Jodhpur assembled again at the above shop for *samyak* i e for prayer etc Dewan Fateh Chand Singhi of Jodhpur happened to pass by the shop on his way to market He enquired as to why these people were doing their prayer there instead of doing it in a *sthanak*? The followers of Bhikanji explained to him the approach

of their *Guru* Pertaining to the number of saints and followers of this new sect, the Dewan was told that there were thirteen monks and thirteen followers only at that time

The Dewan was accompanied by an attendant who was also a poet He soon composed a couplet and described the new path as Terapanth *Unknowingly he had given this sect a name which* Bhikanji did not even think of Thus came to the knowledge of common people the name of Terapanth Jaina sect When this news reached Bhikanji at some place in Kantha (Marwar) he stood up raised his hands in prayer and said *O God it is your path* (Tera—in Hindi means yours) He explained it further as the followers practise and adhere to thirteen specific vows so it is Terapanth (Terah—in Hindi means thirteen)

After this incidental naming ceremony of the sect he started preparations for his second initiation as decided earlier to put an end to the controversy between him and Raghunathji For *Bhav sanyam* (second initiation) he fixed the day of Ashadh Shukla 15th of 1760 A D He himself came to the village Kelwa near Rajnagar for Chaturmas alongwith four other monks Before Bhikanji s arrival the followers of Raghunathji had already floated rumours about him Raghunathji instructed the people not to give any help to this rebel monk and his followers Some people of village Kelwa conspired to get rid of Bhikanji and compelled him to stay in a deserted and haunted place called Andheri Ori It was a dark cell in an abondoned Jaina temple in the village But in the next morning they were shocked when they found Bhikanji and other monks hale and hearty They felt ashamed of their conduct On the auspicious day of Ashadh Poornima all the saints who were with Swamiji reinitiated themselves It was on this day that the Terapanth sect was born Nomenclature of the sect had already been acquired at Jodhpur

After the end of Chaturmas all the thirteen monks assembled and discussed the principles and beliefs of Bhikanji Six of the monks fell out with the sect on issues relating to Bhikanji s principles and deserted him Now the group was reduced to seven only For about four years the sect did not have any nun A few days later three nuns were added to the Terapanth sect

At the initial stage of these hostile circumstances some times it seemed as if Acharya Bhikshu would fall into torture

despair He decided that instead of preaching he should strive for self emancipation At this critial stage two monks of his group advised him not to confine himself to personal *tapasya* (penance) but to preach and convince people and start his missionary activities which Bhikanji accepted in right earnest and started preaching real *Dharma* again In 1775 A D Bhikshu wrote two important *Lekhpatra* One was the code of conduct for Terapanthi monks and the other was a letter nominathing Bharimalji as his successor

Throughout his life Bhikanji worked relentlessly and never thought of rest In his old age too he worked day and night and continued religious tours and discourses for the training of young monks and nuns He had his last Chaturmas at Siryari in 1803 A D During the month of June July Swamiji developed ailment which continued for a month Later he declared his *Santhara* on the twelfth day of Bhadra Shukla of 1803 A D and at the ripe age of seventy seven years Swamiji breathed his last

Saint Ramcharan the founder of Shahpura *peeth* of Ramsnehi sect was one of the closest friend of Bhikanji It is strange coincidence that both of them decided to adopt ascetic life in their youth Later both became ascetic in the same year (1751 A D) The influence of Jain philosophy on Ramcharan is avident from the fact that his interpretation of the Word Terapanth in his devotional composition is exactly the same as was used by Bhikanji It is interesting to note that some of the rules of conduct for the followers of Ramsnehi seet are quite identical to those of the Terapanth works

CONTRIBUTION OF ACHARYA BHIKSHU

Acharya Bhikshu s contributions to the Terapanth Order as a founder and propagator are manifold He is supposed to have revolutionised one the contenporary Jain religion and philosophy and paved the way for its rejuvenation Although this started in a modest way but in due course of time it became a dominant force for the transformation of the Jain Order in particular and society in general Looking into the popularity of this sect it would be in the fitness of things to give credit to Bhikanji for his fortitude With the gradual acceptance of the interpretation of Jain Scriptures and their commentaries by Acharya Bhikshu and

other Acharyas of Terapanth it has achieved its objective It is primarily because the ideas and interpretations of Acharya Bhikshu and his followers were free from prejudice narrow vision and orthodoxy According to him the path to Lord is not a bypass or lane but a highway which does not end at a blind alley This is the straight road leading to eternal bliss and *Nirvana* According to Yuvacharya Mahapragya Acharya Bhikshu regarded all religions as one He had even advocated that sinless acts of a man of perverse attitude leads him to religion and thus emphasised original liberal Jain tradition in a more comprehensive manner The trinity of Jainism i e right attitude right knowledge and right conduct is all embracing as ocean and all pervading as air Therefore the religious objective is for one and all This attitude of Bhikshuji is regarded as the keystone of the Terapanth Here it is pertinent to mention that the Acharya was not interested in founding a new sect but perhaps it was so destined and that he had to accept the unavoidable He was a great champion of unity of religions and a form believer of non violence He denounced violence in any firm physical or mental and declared that the attitude and thinking cannot be segregated from actual doing One cannot be protected at the cost of another Even mercy killing of creatures though with a sence of profound compassion cannot be regarded as a duty and it should be shunned at a earlist

The contribution of Acharya Bhikshu in the field of Jain traditional thought is unique His interpretation of the doctrines of *Dan* and *Daya* are of their own kind and on the basis of this he parted company with his preceptor Acharya Raghunathji of *Sthanakvasi* sect According to contemporary Jain thinking *Dan* is a gift to a needy person and it is a constituent of religion Similarly *Daya* is expressed out of pity According to Acharya Bhikshu *Dan* if considered only giving alms to needy people and through it accumulating religious excellence then those especially the poor who do not give *Dan* will certainly be discarded from religion and will have no place in heaven whatsoever In that situation the religion would be monopolised by only the rich Bhikshu declared that *Dan* has nothing to do with religion He time and agian emphasised the right attitude towards the concept of *Dan* If one feels that he has more than his needs he should pass it away to the more needy According to Acharya each *Jiva*

present on earth depends upon other *Jivas* for its existence It is therefore erroneous notion to deprive the *Jiva* from its very life whatever may be the pretext of doing so People should be convinced to observe non injury and leave acts of savagery

Bhikshu s contribution towards the enrichment of Jain literature is superb The original Jain canonical literature was written in *Prakrata Apbhransha* and *Sanskrit* which were not commonly used during late medieval period Regional languages and dialects were used as medium of expression Bhikshuji also adopted Rajasthani as the medium of communication and he composed religious instructions in Rajasthani in the form of *Dhal* i e lyrical poems His compositions were also always in accordance with musical notations Acharya Tulsi has edited three of such volumes The aim of the Acharya was communication with the masses It is interesting to note that original and authentic copy of Bhikshuji s writings are now preserved at Jain Vishwa Bharati Ladnun

ACHARYA BHARIMAL AND ACHARYA RAICHAND

We have already seen how Acharya Bhikshu rebelled against the commonly prevalent concepts of religion He launched relentless struggle and cru ade against the erroneous interpretation of Jain *Shastras* Thus the foundation of the Terapanth Jain Order had been laid deep and the new Order was destined to grow in size and stature with the passage of time Once the Terapanth Jain thought took the form of an institution it necessitated the continuation of the tradition of nominating successors to carry on the unfinished task of the founder

Muni Bharimal was the immediate successor of Acharya Bhikshu He was a distinguished monk out of the group of ascetics who parted company with Acharya Raghunathji to join muni Bhikanji s Order Bharimalji was born [in a middle class family of Oswals (Gotra Lodha) Jains in 1747 A D at Bara Mooha Village near Bhilwara His father was Kishnoji and mother s name was Dhami Devi Bharimalji was initiated into the Terapanth Jain sect at the young age of ten years with his father at Bagor His *Deeksha Guru* was undoubtedly Muni Bhikanji Muni Bharimal was a dedicated disciple of Acharya Bhikshu He spent forty four years under his *Guru* with utmost sincerity and devotion Th major portion of his formal education was accomplished under the guidance of Acharya Bhikshu During the course of Muni

Bharimal s learning his master did his best to make himself dependent Muni Bharimal was an extraordinary copier of the Terapanth literature About half a million *shlokas* were copied by him from ten important religious books He also had an opportunity to copy each composition of his *Guru* As a result of his strenuous endeavour all the copies of Acharya Bhikshu s writings became popular as the only authentic copies Muni Bharimal was declared the first ever *Yuvacharya* of the Terapanth Order He remained *Yuvacharya* for 28 long years before taking over the charge of Acharyaship in 1803 A D

He was a good orator too The interpretation and presentation of facts in sound and lucid voice of Acharya Bharimal attracted his audience from far and near both from Terapanth as well as from other sects His reputation as a true ascetic went far beyond the narrow limits of his own sect Many monks from other sects use to come to him for guidance Acharya Bharimal was an exponent of emancipation of women He insisted on the education of girls in particular Under the guidance of Acharya Bharimal the Terapanth Order witnessed manyfold developments The number of monks and nuns increased steadily strengthening the *Sangha* to a great extent It was coincidence that he happened to meet and initiate one of his most enlightened disciples at Jaipur during his visit in 1790 A D He was Muni Jeetmal

On the request of some Sravkas Acharya Bharimal visited Udaipur in the summer of 1818 A D He was welcomed by all sections of society Citizens of Udaipur made the best use of the highly enlightened group of Jain theologians and thinkers During their one month s stay Maharana himself visited them for about eleven times Acharya Bharimal was a keen observer of the behaviour of his fellow monks From the year 1820 A D it was noticed that due to old age and some ailments Acharya Bharimal reduced the number of his long tours and undertook short journeys Having realized the gradual decline in his health he decided to nominate his successor Though a man of very strong will and austere habits, Acharya Bharimal could not prove his mettle in the matter of nomination of his successor It so happened that when Acharya Bharimal wrote in his own hand the succession letter *munis* (monks) were astonished to see three names of his successors After the repeated requests of *muni* Jeetmal and others he then chose Muni Raichand as his successor

occupied the seat of the Acharya of Terapanth sect Acharya Jayacharya made untiring efforts for the growth and progress of Terapanth He innovated the methodology for the over all expansion of the Terapanth Order Jayacharya was also a calligraphist par excellence He inspired his *Sadhus* and *Sadhvis* to improve their handwriting Side by side the skills of painting sewing and polishing utensils were also developed in the Terapanth Order He himself wrote the life history of Acharya Bhikshu and his own predecessor Acharya Rishi Rai He contributed not less than 126 books to the literaty treasure of Terepanth and Rajasthani language Jayacharya introduced several new rules and practices He is credited with giving rise to many novel spiritual practices Celebration of *Pattotsava Maryada Mahotsva* etc were some of the important celebrations which he initiated Acharya Jayacharya remained a strict disciplinarian to the last breath of his life

It is said that in the rocky region of divergent ideologies and philosophies a man of foresight Acharya Bhikshu carved out a narrow track for the seekers of truth Acharya Jeetmal or Jayacharya turned it into a royal road Under his Acharyaship Terapanth spread in many distant area of India for first time and ignited the spark of the religious awakening People in large numbers embraced Terapanth religion Jayacharya had an impressive personality Almost every time he met an administrator or a ruler during his religious tours he left an indelible impression of his dynamic personality on him During Shri Jayacharya s stay at Jaipur in 1880 81 A D the ruler of Jaipur Maharaja Ram Singh used to visit him in disguise Jayacharya was endowed with a great vision also He was a multi faceted personality Like his three predecessor Acharyas Jayacharya also nominated his successor The choice fell on Muni Maghraj in 1863 A D at Churu As *Yuyacharya* Maghvagani (Maghraj) relieved his *Guru* of the heavy burden of disciplining the order Jayacharya got an ample opportunity to concentrate on achieving the perfection of *Swadhyaya* From 1873 A D till his death in 1880 A D he suffered from one or the other ailments which resulted in the reduction of his movement In 1879 A D he decided to move to Jaipur on the request of a prominent *Sravak* Lala Bherulal and reached Jaipur In 1880 A D he had his *Chaturmasa* and the *Maryada Mahotsav* at Jaipur Jayacharya had his succeeding at

Jaipur *Chaturmasa* after cancelling the tour of Thali area (Bikaner etc)

His health deteriorated and Jayacharya attained his *nirvan* in 1881 A D Thus came to an end the most dynamic era of the fourth Acharya

ACHARYA MAGHVAGANI

In the year 1851 A D a boy of eleven years named Maghva was initiated to the Terapanth *Dharm Sangha* by *Yuvacharya* Jeetmalji at Ludnun city This child monk later became the fifth Acharya of Terapanth sect He was born at Bidasar in 1840 A D Since he was born in Magha *Nakshatra* therefore he was named as Maghva At a very tender age he lost his father and the responsibility of looking after him devolved on his mother Mother Bannoji expressed her desire to embrace the ascetic life together with Maghva

He looked handsome and attractive Acharya Kalugani (the eighth pontiff) often used to say that he had never seen such a magnetic personality in his life Maghvagani was gifted with high ascetic instincts and conscientiousness For his modest and meak behaviour he was known as *Ajatshatru* (one who doesn t have any enemy) He is known as the first Scholar of Sanskrit in Terapanth sect though the seeds of Sanskrit learning were sown by Jayacharya Maghvagani strove hard to learn the Jain *Agamas* His memory was very sharp He was an extraodinary calligraphist His sole aim was to help and serve others His submissive nature was a source of great inspiration to other saints In 1862 A D he was exempted from the routine duties of a monk and nominated as *Yuvacharya* (heir apparent) in 1863 A D by Acharya Jayacharya Maghvagani was twenty four at the time of his nomination as *Yuvacharya*

Maghvagani got elevated as Acharya in 1881 A D at Jaipur after the demise of the fourth Acharya and looked after the Terapanth *Sangha* for eleven and a half years with utmost dedication After three continuous *Chaturmas* in Thali area he decided to move to Marwar In 1885 A D he stayed at Jodhpur for *Chaturmas* He toured Mewar Ajmer and Thali area and had to be hospitalised there for treatment In 1892 A D when he was camping at Ratangarh, the Acharya had a constant tendency of nausea and fever Physically he became very weak Considering

that the end of life was fast approaching Acharya Maghvagani took an immediate step of nominating Manakgani as his *Yuvacharya* On Chaitra Krishna 2nd 1892 A D He wished that he should be put in sitting posture As soon as he was put in that position he took a yawn and his soul departed Thus came the end of the life of the fifth Acharya of Terapanth

ACHARYA MANAKGANI

Acharya Manakgani the sixth Pontiff of the Terapanth belonged to the family of Hukam Chandji and Smt Chotuji of Shrimali caste and Kharad gotra He was born at Jaipur on Bhadra Krishna 4th 1855 A D Manak was only two years old at that time when his father died When Jayacharya was having his *Chaturmas* at Jaipur in 1871 A D a sixteen year old young boy Manak came into contact with the Acharya At an appropriate time Manak expressed his desire to Jayacharya to become a monk Jayacharya initiated him to monk s life in 1871 A D He attracted the attention of Jayacharya because of his brilliance cultured behaviour politeness and adaptability Manakgani learnt much more under the guidance of Jayacharya for about nine and a half years In 1892 A D Acharya Maghvagani fell ill at Sardarshahar and became very weak Kaluji (the elder) and Motiji Swami etc approached him and requested him for the nomination of *Yuvacharya* and make a written declaration to that effect Acharya accepted their request and wrote a succession letter on Chaitra Krishna 2nd 1892 A D at Sardarshahar Manakgani was formally nominated as *Yuvacharya* Manakgani could remain as *Yuvacharya* only for four days He was formally installed on the seat of the Acharyaship of Terapanth following the death of his *Guru*

It seems that Acharya Manakgani had a great fascination for undertaking tours and visiting new places After completing four months stay at Sardarshahar he set out on his tour to Haryana in 1893 A D This year Acharya Manakgani had *Maryada Mahotsava* at Hansi After a stay of 27 days at Bhiwani Acharya moved towards Rajasthan Till the completion of half of his sojourn at this place he was hale and hearty He had his last *Chaturmas* at Sujangarh in 1897 A D Here he fell ill When people requested him for the nomination of his successor he did not pay any heed to their request Acharya Manakgani told the monks that he was

well aware of his duty and would make necessary and proper arrangements needed by Terapanth Sangha at a proper time In the night he breathed his last It was the first time in the history of Terapanth that a Pontiff passed away without nominating his successor Unnerved by the situatton the monks nominated Muni Maganlalji and Kaluramji to look after the general management of the *Sangha* After the conclusion of the current *Chaturmas* Muni Kaluji proposed the name of Muni Dalchandji in his absence for the Acharyaship with the consent of saints and nuns Everybody accepted it and thus came the end of suspense and uncertainity in the *Sangha*

ACHARYA DALGANI SWAMI

Dalchand was born in Ujjain (M P) as a son of Kani Ramji and Smt Jadawanji of Oswal family in 1852 A D His father died when Dalchand was of a tender age In the absence of his father Dalchand was brought up by his mother But she became a nun when Dalchand was only elevan years old After the initiation of his mother to the ascetic life Dalchand also felt fascinated towards religious conduct and within three years he took initiation to asceticism and became a monk From Indore Dalchand set out for Thali and Jayacharya the then Acharya handed him (Dalmuni) over to Hiralalji for proper education There he learnt by heart the five *Agamas* These years proved to be the most important years as regards this young ascetic for the study of the fundamentals of Jainism He was a good orator with a loud and clear voice and used to influence the audience by his speech

In 1897 A D the Sixth Acharya of Terapanth sect passed away at Sujangarh without nominating his successor Most of the monks and nuns later had congregated at Ladnun Everybody was anxious to know the action of the monks regarding the election of the next head of the *Sangha* Taking into consideration the feelings of all the monks and nuns Dalgani Swami was declared by Kaluji Swami as the Seventh Pontiff of Terapanth Order When Dalgani alongwith seven monks reached Chopasani village ten Kms from Jodhpur a few Sravakas met him They informed him about his unanimous nomination as the seventh Acharya of the Panth From Jodhpur, Dalgani reached Ladnun where he was appropriately welcomed Thus it was for the first time

in the history of Terapanth sect that the seat of the Acharya remained vacant for almost three months As Acharya his radiance became so powerful that what to say of monks even the *Sravakas* couldn t dare see him and touch his feet He remained Acharya of the Terapanth Order for almost twelve years

Acharya Dalgani s tenure experienced the ghastly and horrible famine which Rajasthan had ever encountered in 1899 A D While touring Mewar he fell seriously ill All monks and nuns approached Acharya Dalgani to declare the name of his successor the same day Being convinced Acharya asked for writing material and wrote the name of his heir apparent He put the Likhit (document) in his Putha It was the name of Muni Kalu of Chapar

Gradually Acharya Dalgani became very sick On Bhadra Shukla 12th 1909 A D he developed acute breathing trouble It was noticed by all that Acharya was going to leave his body soon In this way after some time the Seventh Pontiff of Terapanth sect died

ACHARYA KALUGANI

Acharya Kalugani was born on Phalgun Shukla 2 (Thursday) 1876 A D His father was Moolchandji and mother Choganji The family had faith in a village diety Kala Bhairon therefore he was generally called as Kalu by his parents Separation from one s father at an early age was usually the destiny of every pontiff of Terapanth In 1877 A D when he was only three his father died Kaluram usually preferred the company of monks and nuns to others Thus gradually the boy and his mother developed inclination and love for the religious life Choganji requested to the Acharya for initiation to the ascetic life at Bidasar In 1887 A D Kaluram his mother Choganji and Kankanwar were initiated by Acharya Maghvagani to ascetic life Kalumuni started his lessons of education and learning under the able guidance of his *Guru* Acharya Maghvagani took every care for his education He was of the view that learning Sanskrit was the key for the study of Jain *Agamas* Terapanth was now proceeding towards self sufficiency in the field of Sanskrit grammar Now it had the key to the study of scriptures

Acharya Kalugani was a mission personified The ninth Acharya of Terapanth sect Acharya Tulsi is the paragon of his

creation We are informed that he could not enjoy the *Yuvacharyaship* because his name was not proclaimed during Dalgani s life time Magan Lal Swami proclaimed Kalugani s name as the eighth Acharya of Terapanth in 1909 A D after the death of Dalganiji During Acharya Kalugani s tenure Terapanth Order experienced a comprehensive expansion The number of ascetics in the order had broken all previous records But the number of monks expelled from the order was also the highest under him i e 35 The tenure of Acharya Kalugani recorded the first visit of some foreign Scholars of Jainism to the Terapanth Sangha like Prof Hermon Jacobi, Dr L P Tessitory and Prof Glency

Incidently Acharya Kalugani had to face a considerable amount of hostility from monks of other Jain sects But he advised his followers to remain calm and turn a deaf ear to this criticism On the request of the *Sravakas* of Haryana, Acharya Kalugaui decided to visit Haryana When Acharya Kalugani was going towards Jawad he became ill When he reached Bhilwara Dr Nandlalji started his systematic treatment But all his efforts to heal his wound proved futile Gradually he became very weak Still he moved from Bhilwara and reached Gangapur He wrote the nomination letter and gave it to Muni Tulsi Acharya put on a white robe and the next moment removed it and passed it over young Muni Tulsi He asked for some water to drink and after seven minutes he breathed his last

ACHARYA TULSI AND HIS *ANUVRATA* MOVEMENT

Acharya Tulsi is the ninth Pontiff of the Terapanth Jain sect and he is regarded as the propounder of the concept of *Anuvrata* movement He was born on October 20 1914 at Ladnun in an Oswal Khatter family His parents were Shri Jhumarmal and Vadnaji Unfortunately his grand father died in 1916 and father in 1918 Tulsi started his formal school education at the age of eight His first teacher was Nandlalji When one of his brother Champalalji became a monk in 1923 A D Tulsi felt more and more drawn towards Jain religion Tulsi was initiated into the Terapanth sect by the Acharya in 1925 A D

His education began under the supervision of his monk brother Champalalji with the direct patronage of the Acharya himself Within a short span of time young Tulsi mastered Sanskrit language and various other books on literature philosophy and

Agamas Tulsi acquired proficiency in writing poetry in Rajasthani dilect besides having achieved a knack for delivering discourses. During the last three years of Kalugani's life Tulsi was the closest follower of the Acharya.

Acharya Kalugani had his last *Chaturmas* at Gangapur near Bhilwara in 1936 A D. In the same year he wrote the *Likhita* and it was read out in the presence of a small gathering and his nomination was proclaimed. Four days later Kalugani breathed his last. The *Yuvacharya* took the responsibility of Acharyaship of the largest single order of monks and nuns amongst the Jain sects of the world on 9th of Bhadra Shukla 1936 A D.

Acharya Tulsi wanted to devote his time in removing the imperfections of his sect in general and evil practices of the *Sravaka Samaj* in particular. Bicentenary celebrations of Terapanth were organised on a massive scale. In the open session he came out with his plan called *naya mod* (New Turn). By his forceful and vigorous discourses Acharya Tulsi was able to inspire the people during his compaign for a positive response. Acharya Tulsi's *Anuvrata* movement could sufficiently be referred to as an example of his determination against society wrapped in collosal ignorance. Acharya Tulsi brought about many changes in the rules of behaviour and norms of observance for the monks and nuns of the Terapanth sect. In the course of guiding and enlightening the Jain community in every field editing of the *Agamas* was an important endeavour in this direction which he took in 1950 A D. Originally it had been planned to bring to light the rich treasure of knowledge enshrined in 32 *Agamas*.

The Acharya believes that a religion which lacks the power to transform life is not the true religion. He has tried at his level to save society from narrow sectarian conflicts communal riots and untouchability. Acharya Tulsi and many other thinkers could not only apprehend the universal nature of religion but also successfully made it a significant tool to solve the national and international problems. The credit for an overall efficient planning of a potential educational structure goes to this ninth Acharya only. Many institutions were planned by his inspiration. The outlines of *Parmarthic Shikshan Sansthan* and *Jain Vishva Bharti* were prepared. In order to realize this idea of world peace into reality J V B has recently established the International Institute

of Peace and non violence In the year 1983 *ANUVIBHA* was also founded with the aims to further the cause of cultural and religious tolerance among the peoples of the world through *Anuvrata Preksha* Meditation and *Jeevan Vijnana*

Acharya Tulsi after studying the sacred literature and computing the necessities of disturbed human society in India and abroad tried to do something at his own level Accordingly he propounded the concept of *Anuvrat* Movement On March 2 1949 at Sardar Shahar Acharya Tulsi launched his *Anuvrat* Movement Through this movement the Acharya urged the individuals to pledge themselves willingly to observe the *anuvratas* through introspections and self restraint

The Late Acharya Kalugani had seen in Tulsi the future of Terapanth and the accomplishment of his noble cause The Acharya has fulfilled the aspirations of his preceptor

CONTRIBUTION OF ACHARYA TULSI

Acharya Tulsi realised that peace was possible only when the tree of violence is completely uprooted from the minds of people He therefore propounded a new system of education which was known as *Jeevan Vijnana* Presently both Acharya Tulsi and Yuvacharya Mahapragya are concentrating on the propagation of this method For strengthening and revitalising the process of emancipation a three dimensional program of human transformation consisting of *Jeevan Vijnana Anuvrata* and *Preksha Dhyana* has been devised During the last two decades Terapanth has shown phenomenal progress in all directions Crossing the boundaries of the country its echo can be heard in different parts of the world It has inspired new hopes among the people against the vicious atmosphere of ever increasing violence and conflicts The chauvinistic approach of nationalism regionalism religious fundamentalism economic subjugation and accumulation of nuclear arsenal have posed a great danger for integration and humanity Terapanth under the able leadership of Acharya Tulsi has shown great concern for this universal phenomenon and they have taken up active lead to solve the problem in their own novel way The *Anuvrata* movement is an effort in the right direction In the preamble to *Anuvrata* Acharya Tulsi conceived that the progress or the regress of a society is best judged by the thoughts and deeds of its people As an individual

is a unit of the society the key to the perfection of society lies in the upliftment of the character of the individual The development of character remains incomplete until there is perfect concord and unity between ones thought and actions

On March 2 1949 Tulsi launched his *Anuvrata* movement which has now become a non violent multi cultural universal human movement One may be cautioned here that it is not Alladin s lamp and one should not expect miracle but it is becoming popular and more and more people are joining hands irrespective of their place and faith in order to materialise this novel experiment

Two international conferences have been organised since 1988 They aimed at achieving the goals of human solidarity universal brotherhood preservation of ecological balance and creation of a non violent socio political world order

Terapanth under the stewardship of Acharya Tulsi and Yuvacharya Mahapragya stands distinct on account of its being responsive to the changing patterns of time It has evolved new methods and techniques better suited to a true religion and has undertaken a phased program of reorientation towards the evolution of a novel global social order It has not only fascinated a sizeable section of enlightened and learned people in the country but has also created a large number of admirers throughout the world

YUVACHARYA MAHAPRAJNA SUCCESSOR OF ACHARYA TULSI

Following the convention Acharya Tulsi nominated Muni Nathmal (The *Mahaprajna*) as his successor on February 3 1979 A D at Rajaldesar town Nathmalji is son of Shri Tolaramji and Smt Baluji and belongs to Chordia Oswal family He was born in Tamkaur village on June 14 1920 A D Nathmal lost his father at an early age of three months In 1929 A D Nathmal along with his mother visited the Acharya who inspired him to the extent that he decided to join his fold and was initiated at Sardarshahar Acharya Kalugani entrusted Muni Tulsi with the responsibility of imparting proper training and education to Nathmalji Muni Nathmal was given intense training of Jaina literature and philosophy by his teachers

In 1943 A D at the age of 23 Nathmalji was appointed *Agraganya* and in 1965 A D Acharya Tulsi nominated him as 'Nikaya Sachiv On November 12 1978 A D Acharya Tulsi conferred on him the title *Mahaprajna* Muni Nathmalji came to be known by his *upadhi* i e *Mahaprajna* and he is still popular as Mahaprajna among the masses He has the quality of a versatile writer Over the years the volume of his creative writing incressed *Mahaprajna* developed the capacity of a competent orator too In our opinion *Mahaprajna* is essentially a creative writer but he is widely regarded as an exponent of Acharya Tulsi s philosophy

Yuvacharya Mahaprajna is credited with having produced more than hundred and twenty books either penned by himself or compiled by others on the basis of his lectures He has written books on wide subjects like philosophy *Preksha Dhyan* life of great personalities and their ideas prose poetry and Sanskrit literature

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